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MALOU

Mlle. Rose knew just what she would give the Americans to eat

MALOU

A Little Swiss Girl

By
MILDRED CRISS

Illustrations by
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TO

MY LITTLE FRIEND IN PARIS

MARIE-LOUISE PLASSE

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MALOU

CHAPTER I

An Old Pink House

HER name was Marie-Louise, but everyone called her Malou. She was just twelve years old, yet she owned the hotel.

It was a very small, old hotel above the village of Chexbres on the hillsides at the eastern end of the lake of Geneva.

More than half the year the country around Chexbres was white with snow. Malou went down

to the village to school on skis. These were swift, thrilling rides, but in the afternoon it would take her more than an hour to climb up the long, twisting hill. Sometimes it would be too cold to stop to rest for fear of freezing, and sometimes the wind would blow so hard that she would have to dig her toes into the snow to keep from being swept off the road. Often there would be days when she could not go out at all because the snow would block the doors and cover the second-floor windows. Fortunately, the barn nestled close to the hotel so that the animals could be reached; they would have starved if they had had to wait for paths to be dug. Those days of staying indoors were long, dreary days; there would be no light except candlelight and no way of knowing whether the sun was shining or whether more snow was falling.

But it was July now, and only the summits of the Alps were white; the pastures were brilliant green; the vineyards, sprayed with a blue solution of copper to kill the grape beetles, were turquoise; the roadsides blossomed with wild flowers, and the surface of the lake sparkled and rippled and danced. It was vacation.

Malou was very much like other little girls in the French part of Switzerland. She was tall

and straight and sturdy. She had soft brown hair which she wore in two long pigtails. Her complexion looked as if the frost of January mornings lingered there, and sometimes her dark eyes danced like winter sunlight sparkling on the snow. She had only three dresses, two of dark blue calico for every day and one of black silk for Sunday. Usually she wore a gay kerchief around her neck, and she always wore a black cotton or a bright-colored silk apron. Malou loved her aprons; they felt so snug. She liked to put her hands into the deep pockets and fumble the odds and ends hiding there. She wore stout shoes with wooden soles and very heavy stockings. Her coat was made of leather and lined with lamb's wool. She did not wear it until the snow came. On cold days during the rest of the year she would put on a tight-fitting knit jersey under her dress. She thought very little about her clothes or being comfortable; there were too many other things in her mind; she had too much work to do. Malou loved to work and she worked harder during vacation than she did at any other time. It was the season when guests were expected. How she loved her hotel, "Les Six Chats." Her grandfather had built it and named it "The Six Cats" because the first guests to arrive had been a

family of black cats, a mother and five kittens.

"This is luck, the best of luck!" old John Fonzalaz had murmured, and given the cats a room. From that time on there had been crowds of cats at the hotel. Some people believed that the Fonzalaz hotel succeeded because of the lucky cats, but the truth was that all of Malou's family had been excellent managers and had done everything they could to make their guests comfortable and happy.

Her mother had died when Malou was a very little girl. She had lived alone with her father. But when she was ten years old her father went into the mountains one day early in spring, during the melting season when avalanches of snow and ice and loose stones come crashing down onto the paths. Malou's father never came back. And people whispered, "chute à pierre," that is to say in French, "falling stones."

"The hotel is yours," the Fonzalaz lawyer had said to Malou, "but your cousin Michel is coming to live with you until you are of age."

Malou had thanked the notary, as he is called in Switzerland, and said, "I'll try to take care of The Six Cats just as Papa would take care of it if he were here."

"We believe that you will, Malou," the lawyer had answered, trying hard not to let her see how sorry he was for her. "You are a Fonzalaz. We feel sure that you will take your father's place."

Malou's hotel was made of rough stone covered with cement and tinted pink. The brown shingle roof was held up by heavy hand-hewn beams. The barn and the Saint Bernard's house and the pigeons' house grouped under one end of the long sloping roof in somewhat the way that young chickens gather under their mother's wing. On both sides of the front door there were plane trees fastened against the wall so that they grew like vines. The windows opened like doors and squeaked, many of them. The shutters were of iron and very rusty. All the old pink house was weather stained, but Malou did not mind. She would have loved it even if it had been tumbling down. It had belonged to her father.

Michel, Grandpère, Mlle Rose, Samuel, and Pataud lived at The Six Cats with Malou.

Michel was very lazy. He was the only member of the Fonzalaz family who hated to work. He would not have come to live with Malou if he had not known that life at The Six Cats would be easy for him, that there would be ample opportunity to take naps, sit in the corner, and drink

red wine. "It will be delightful there, the mountain air will agree with me; in summer I can sit on the terrace and in winter I can sit in front of the fire." This is what Michel had said to himself when the Fonzalaz lawyer had asked him to come to live with Malou at Chexbres.

Grandpère was so old that he had lost his wits. All that he could think of was playing his fiddle.

Mlle Rose was the housekeeper. No one could remember when she had not been at The Six Cats, and everyone was very sure that things would have fallen to pieces long ago if it had not been for her.

Samuel was the farmer. There certainly would have been very little to eat if it had not been for Samuel.

Then Pataud! He was Malou's most intimate friend. He was an enormous, large-mouthed, large-eyed, shaggy dog. Malou believed that Pataud's feet were larger than any other dog's feet in Switzerland. So she called him "Pataud" because it means big feet.

Michel, Grandpère, Mlle Rose, Samuel, and Pataud were all the family Malou had, and few guests came to The Six Cats.

"More cats than luck!" growled Michel, and insisted that the hotel would never succeed.

Pataud was Malou's most intimate friend

It was difficult. There were so many animals to feed and so much work to be done, far more than Mlle Rose, Samuel, and Malou could do. Michel, of course, did not count; he never worked. And Grandpère could only fiddle.

"What would Papa do if he were here?" Malou kept asking herself. "I am sure he would be able to do something. I wonder what it would be. I wonder what he *could* do? I wonder what I can do?" Sometimes the tears would come because there seemed to be no answer.

But one morning in July the telephone rang!

When Malou heard it she was washing Pataud in the large stone trough under the pump in front of the hotel. She left him standing in the water and flew into the office, pulled down the receivers from their little round pegs on the side of the telephone, and clapped them to her ears. She was so excited that she held both the receivers wrong side out.

"Allo! Allo!" That's the way the French say it. Malou was breathless. "Who is it? What do you want? Do you want The Six Cats?"

All she could hear was a buzz and a whir!

"Oh, dear!" she sighed. "If I can't make them understand me they will go away! Oh, dear! What shall I do?"

Then she discovered her mistake and turned round the receivers, but she was so excited that she let one drop and could not pick it up again because someone was speaking, and whoever it was was mixing French and English in the most confusing manner.

"Oh!" she said again almost in tears, "I wish I could understand English!" She did know a few phrases and she tried one of them now: "Do you want The Six Cats?" She pronounced six as if it were "seex."

Poor Malou. The reply came in English and it came so fast that she could not catch the meaning of one word. She went back to French. "I'm sorry. I do not understand. Will you tell me again in French what it is that you want?"

More buzzing, then silence.

"Please, Mademoiselle," Malou begged the central. "Give him back to me. Please."

After a moment or two the voice began again, "Is this The Six Cats?"

"Yes! Yes!" she answered eagerly. "Do you want to come here?"

"I do," was the reply, "if you have a large double room with a private bath, and if you can accommodate my chauffeur and maid."

Malou's heart jumped. Someone with an auto-

mobile and servants wanted to come to the hotel! It took away her breath!

"We have the rooms, Monsieur, very good rooms with running water in them, but we have no private baths." Malou dreaded to say this. She was afraid the gentleman would not come when he heard there were no private baths. "I think you will be comfortable, Monsieur. The rooms are large and there is always hot water."

There was a moment's silence. Malou thought he had rung off. Her heart sank. "He won't come," she thought. "No one comes when they know about the baths."

But the gentleman was speaking again. "How much is the room? Is there sunlight? Does it face the lake? Are there any noisy people in the hotel? Is there a garage where we can put the automobile? Is there someone to take proper care of the car?"

Malou was standing on tiptoe, her knees were trembling; it was with the greatest difficulty that she managed to speak clearly. She told the price of the room, explained that there was sunlight and that there was a balcony toward the lake. "There is no one else in the hotel, Monsieur. I think you will not be disturbed. I think

you will like the room, Monsieur. And there is a garage and a man to clean the car."

Malou was frightened after she had spoken about the garage and the man. There was no real garage, just an old stable, and no man to wash the car except Samuel, and Samuel disliked washing cars, refused to wash them, in fact, unless the weather was poor so that he could not work in the garden. Malou hoped the gentleman would not be angry. She had not meant to tell an untruth.

The buzzing came back now. The gentleman's voice seemed far away. "We shall arrive sometime this . . ." Malou could not hear whether he said morning, afternoon, or evening, because just at that moment Michel came clumping into the room with his wooden shoes.

Michel was excited. "Who is it? What is it? What do they want? Why didn't you wake me? Why is it that no one ever wakes me? What did you say to them? Who was it, anyway? What did they say to you?" Michel kept right on asking questions, so that it was impossible for Malou to explain,

She watched him and did not try to speak until she saw that the deep red color of his forehead was turning a little less red. Malou knew

that Michel was not angry; she knew that he was just excited; he was often excited this way when he waked up suddenly or when anything unusual happened. It was extremely unusual for the telephone to ring at The Six Cats. Malou waited until she felt that Michel was calm enough to listen. Then she told him that there were guests coming. "Guests! With an automobile! And servants! Think of it, Michel! They want the balcony room! Think of it, Michel! Guests with an automobile!"

"*Tiens*," said Michel, which meant a number of things, such as "Indeed!" "You don't say so!" "Well, well!" "*Tiens!*" he said again, "I hope they pay their bill!"

"I'm sure they will, Michel! I'm sure they will! They will have lots of money and they will pay us a great deal!"

Michel patted the top of her head. "When there's more there besides brown curls," he said, "you'll know that it's best to be prepared for the worst."

Malou shook her head. "No, Michel! Papa didn't say that. He used to say that if you work hard and do the best you can you can expect good things to happen."

Sometimes Michel grew tired of hearing Ma-

lou talk of her father. "Always your father! Will you never stop thinking of him?"

Malou's eyes flashed. "Papa was the most wonderful man in the world. Everything he said was true. Everything he did was right. Everything!"

"*Tiens!*" said Michel again, and walked off.

Malou stood looking after him. "I wish," she thought, "he were not so lazy and grumpy. I wish he were like Papa." She smiled. Usually when Malou smiled it was because she was thinking of something beautiful. "If Michel were like Papa The Six Cats would be filled with people all the time."

Not only did Malou love the old pink house but she enjoyed all the work that she had to do. She really loved to work, loved to take care of the pigs and chickens, loved to weed in Samuel's garden or help him bring in the cows from pasture. And she liked all the things that she had to do indoors for Mlle Rose. Cooking, sewing, cleaning, waiting on the tables, making the beds, and running errands seemed like play to Malou. Her Six Cats might have been a doll's house.

On clear mornings she would open her eyes just as the sun climbed up from behind the mountains across the lake. She would lie still a few minutes to listen to the cowbells tinkling on

the pastures and the magpies chattering in the branches of the horse-chestnut tree outside her window beside the terrace. Sometimes the leaves of that tree sang. Malou understood their song; it was either a bright song of sunshine or a sad song of rain. Very often before anyone was astir she would run into the garden and gather fresh, cool strawberries as big as apples and as soft as plums. Nothing else tasted so good as these strawberries, and nothing else ever smelled so sweet as the garden drenched with the morning dew.

Malou loved everything that belonged to her. Six Cats, everything—from the tumbled-down farmhouse where Samuel lived and kept the old horse that he had named Escargot, or snail, because it moved so slowly, to the rusty pump and trough where all the animals came to drink and where Pataud took his baths. She loved the pastures rolling down the hillsides, the garden and the terrace with the singing horse-chestnut tree. But best of all, perhaps, she loved the old pink house.

But life at The Six Cats was difficult, very difficult, sometimes. There was not enough money to pay Samuel and Mlle Rose. Of course, they never complained; they were contented to go on working for Malou inasmuch as they felt

that The Six Cats was their home and they believed that guests would come. Every day or so they would say, "Perhaps to-morrow!"

But no guests had come for over a month; it seemed as if the hotel were forgotten.

No wonder that Malou and Michel were excited when the telephone rang. No wonder that Malou turned the receivers wrong side out.

Guests were coming at last!

"*Tiens*," Michel kept muttering, "I hope these people pay their bill, these stylish guests with their automobile and their servants!"

He was still muttering when Mlle Rose came in —dear faithful Mlle Rose with her sweet, round, smiling face and her great dark eyes. She had slipped softly into the room without Malou or Michel seeing her. "Stop muttering foolishness, Michel," she said pleasantly but firmly. "Go upstairs and open the shutters in the balcony room."

But Michel refused to go, so Malou went. She came down again three steps at a time, skipped to Mlle Rose and threw her arms around her neck. "Think of it, think of it, automobiles and servants! I knew it would happen!"

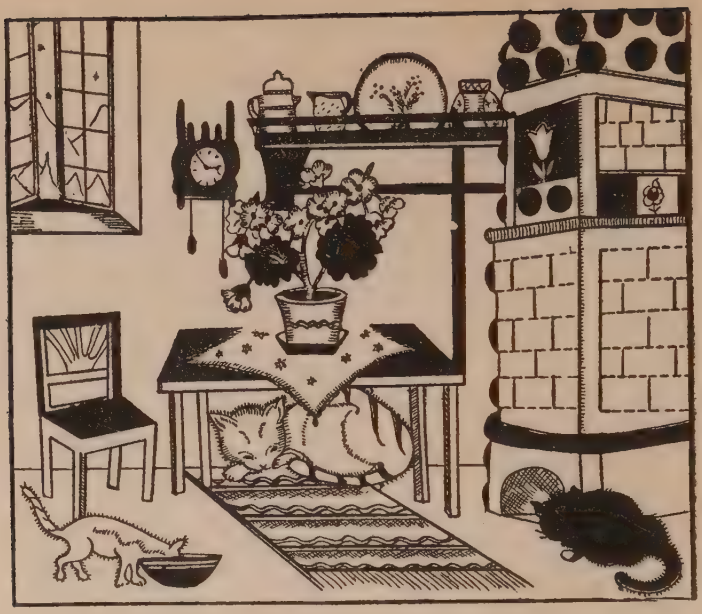
Mlle Rose's face was radiant.

"What time did they say they would arrive?"

Malou explained that Michel had made such a noise with his wooden shoes that she could not hear what the gentleman had said.

"In that case," said Mlle Rose, "we had better hurry; they might come any minute." She scribbled down five or six things on a pad and left it on the desk for Samuel. Mlle Rose had to write down what she wanted Samuel to do, otherwise he would tell her afterward that she had not asked him to do anything. Mlle Rose was hurrying down the corridor, talking to herself about the luncheon, "Spinach soup, chicken pâté, salad, fruit, and cheese." Then to Malou, who was following close at her heels, she said, "Run to the garden, Malou. Bring in some spinach, lettuce, and strawberries. And let me see. Oh, yes, tell Samuel that we need fagots in the living room. The wind has shifted to the north; it'll be cold by tea time. We don't want the guests to be uncomfortable. Hurry, Malou. It's almost noon now."

Malou went as fast as she could. So did Mlle Rose and so did Samuel. They were nearly ready as the midday bells in the valley began to ring and an automobile came climbing up the long steep road from the village of Chexbres to The Six Cats.



CHAPTER II

Mr. and Mrs. James F. Wolvington Goddard

THE guests' name was Goddard, Mr. and Mrs. James F. Wolvington Goddard, and the address which they wrote in the register filled two lines. They were not lovely to look upon nor were their manners agreeable.

"Do you think they will like it here?" Malou whispered to Mlle Rose as they were carrying up the luggage.

Mlle Rose did not answer.

"Do you think they will be happy?" Malou asked again.

Mlle Rose smiled, and Malou understood that she did not want to be discouraging.

They took the Goddards upstairs. "This is the room, Monsieur-et-dame," which was Mlle Rose's quick way of saying "Monsieur and Madame." Her bright face was all smiles, and she was holding a great clumsy bag in one hand while she opened the door with the other.

The Goddards followed her into the room and said nothing.

Malou set the valise she was carrying on an old rickety three-legged stool. "I hope you will like the room; it's the very best we have."

"It will do," Mr. Goddard said politely enough but in extremely poor French.

Malou threw open the large doors onto the balcony. "The view is beautiful, Monsieur; at sunset the lake looks like fire."

Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Goddard were paying the slightest attention. But Malou did not know; she was looking toward the lake. "The vineyards are here on the hillside. Strangers like them; they are so blue; it's the copper spray that's put on them to kill the grape beetle that

makes them blue. When the weather is fine you can have your breakfast on the balcony." She turned and smiled. "I can bring it to you any time you wish, just ring."

Mr. Goddard was looking as if he might like to smile. "Thank you," he said, "and now will you be kind enough to close the doors? My wife is sensitive to the damp air."

"Come, Malou," Mlle Rose called softly. "There are other bags to be brought upstairs, and I shall need you in the dining room."

"I'm coming," and Malou ran across the room. Unfortunately, the door slipped out of her hands and banged. Perhaps it was just as well that neither Malou nor Mlle Rose could see the expression on the faces of the new guests.

"Oh, dear!" Malou exclaimed. "I didn't mean to do that! I shouldn't have done it for worlds. Do you suppose they will be angry, Mademoiselle Rose? Do you think they will want to go away?"

"They may unless we can make Grandpère stop playing his fiddle," was Mlle Rose's reply. "Go to his room, Malou. See if you can persuade him to stop."

Malou skipped off to her grandfather's room,

opened the door softly, tiptoed up behind the bent old man and kissed him on the back of his curly white head. "Bon jour," she said; it was her French way of saying "good-morning." "Isn't it time that you went for a walk in the garden? It will be lunch time before you know it and you should not eat until you have had a little exercise. That's what Mademoiselle Rose says, you know. Come along with me. I'll take you down."

But Grandpère did not wish to go into the garden; the only thing he wanted was to be let alone and to be allowed to play his fiddle as much as he liked. He wagged his white head at Malou, smiled his toothless smile, and refused to stir from his place. "I'll stay here," he said. "Tell Mademoiselle Rose to bring me whatever she likes, I don't want to eat very much. I want to go on playing. Run along, child. I shall not walk this morning."

Malou thought a minute, but as there was nothing she could do she gave up and ran downstairs.

In the corridor she met the Goddards's maid, who stopped her and began saying a number of things in English.

Alas! The only word Malou could make out was "tea."

That Malou did not understand English, however, never occurred to the maid, so she kept right on talking.

What a babble of strange words it was! How fast they came! And how the endings seemed somehow or other to get lost in the woman's throat.

Nevertheless, Malou was able to catch several words; they were "motor," "fatigued," and "hungry." She guessed what was wanted and said very politely in French, "I shall bring some tea immediately. Do you think that Monsieur and Madame Goddard would like some toast and perhaps a little jam? Mademoiselle Rose made very good jam from the gooseberries last fall. Do you think it would be nice with the toast?"

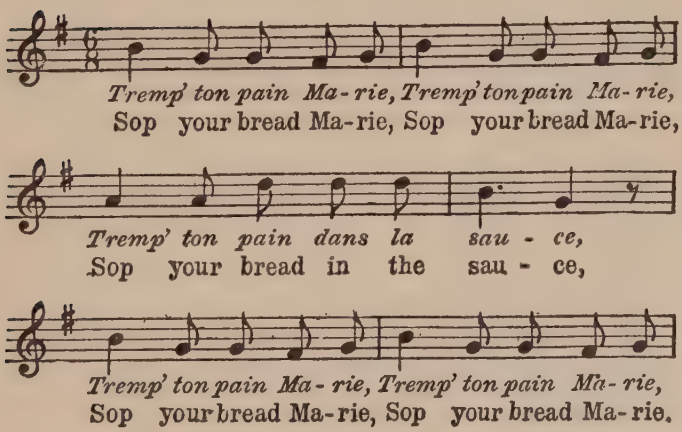
The maid nodded, but she had no idea what Malou had said.

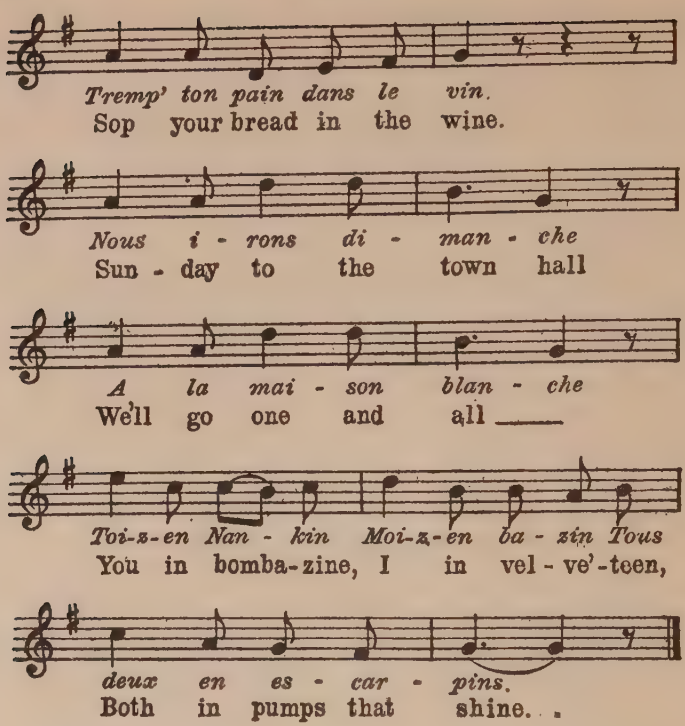
"Toast and jam," Malou murmured as she hurried down the hall. "I hope I can make the tea right. It's hard to make. I hope I shall be able to make it right."

The first difficulty was that she could not find the teapot; it was not in its usual corner. "Oh,

dear!" she thought, "if I keep them waiting they may want to go away. They may get very angry." She put the kettle on to boil, and while she was waiting to hear it sing she hunted for the teapot and found it upside down on the window sill where Mlle Rose had left it to air in the sun.

After what seemed to Malou a very long time the heavy old iron kettle began to hum. She was delighted and began to sing:

TREMP' TON PAIN MARIE

Tremp' ton pain Ma-rie, Tremp' ton pain Ma-rie,
Sop your bread Ma-rie, Sop your bread Ma-rie,
Tremp' ton pain dans la sau-ce,
Sop your bread in the sau-ce,
Tremp' ton pain Ma-rie, Tremp' ton pain Ma-rie,
Sop your bread Ma-rie, Sop your bread Ma-rie.


Tremp' ton pain dans le vin.
Sop your bread in the wine.
Nous i - rons di - man - che
Sun - day to the town hall
A la mai - son blan - che
We'll go one and all
Toi-z-en Nan - kin Moi-z-en ba - zin Tous
You in bomba-zine, I in vel - ve'-teen,
deux en es - car - pins.
Both in pumps that shine.

Malou was happy. She was working for guests that had come to The Six Cats. She arranged the things on the tray and started upstairs.

In the hall she met Samuel.

He was standing by the front door, looking very much upset. "Malou," he said, "that chauffeur says I'm to wash the car. I can't.

I'm mowing the hay. I can't stop to wash a car."

Malou set down the tea tray and going up close to Samuel, tugging gently at the ends of his rough gray beard, she said, "It's my fault, Samuel. I wanted the guests to come so badly that I said you would wash their car. It's all my fault. You see, I told them you would do it, Samuel. Won't you? Couldn't you, just this once, just for the sake of The Six Cats? Please, Samuel. Please! The guests might leave if the car isn't washed. Won't you do it? Couldn't you let the hay wait just this once, Samuel? Please!"

Samuel hung his head. "I haven't time," he said. "There's the hay; I must get in the hay."

"I'll help you and Mademoiselle Rose will help, too. The very minute we finish with the lunch we will come out to work until it's time to prepare the dinner. Honestly we will. Please, Samuel! Please wash the car."

"I'll wash it the first bad day," was all he said, and walked off.

Malou forgot the tea and stood watching him. "Dear old Samuel. It's my fault. I knew he would hate to wash that car. I should not have said that he would."

Samuel was halfway across the yard that lay

between the hotel and the farmhouse. He had stopped at the trough to wash his hands and was plucking off a dead leaf or two from the geraniums that stood in a line across the top of the old wooden pump.

"Samuel," Malou called out to him, "Samuel. Never mind. If you will leave the hose out and fix it for me I'll try to wash the car after lunch."

Samuel turned around and grinned. Malou waved to him, picked up the tea tray, and hurried upstairs.

The Goddards's maid was waiting in the corridor. She took the tray and disappeared without a word.

It was almost one o'clock, and Malou flew to her work. The dining-room table had to be set, the tablecloth and napkins brought down from the linen closet, the silver rubbed up, the salt and peppers filled, the glasses polished. She had just finished all this when Mlle Rose told her to ring the luncheon bell.

Malou ran outdoors and pulled hard on the frayed bell rope, hanging from the second-story window. Then she hurried indoors, took off her black apron, and put on her best one.

She need not have hurried at all. The Goddards

did not come down for more than half an hour after the bell rang. And when they did come they asked Malou if there were no waitress and if she were going to serve them.

"I think I can do it nicely," said Malou, standing up as straight as possible. She felt very little and awkward. She wished her skirts were longer and that there were high heels on her shoes.

"May we have the table moved?" Mr. Goddard asked. "We do not like to be near the window because of the glare." Neither he nor Mrs. Goddard had the slightest idea of the French word for glare, so they just made faces and pointed at the sunlight.

Malou understood and changed the table. She really did not mind a bit, except that she was sorry that the Goddards would not be able to see the view. "The lake and the vineyards are beautiful in the middle of the day," she said. "They are turquoise blue like the lake."

"Thank you," said the Goddards. "We have seen the view."

Malou was afraid that the spinach soup might be curdled from waiting so long, but fortunately it was not; it was Mlle Rose's best. The Goddards ate it without a word. The chauffeur and

the maid, who were seated at a little table in another room, ate three plates of soup. Malou was delighted. She liked to have Mlle Rose's soup please, and she did not mind that there was none left for her; she could have spinach soup when there were no guests. All that mattered was that they should be pleased. Malou thought of nothing else.

"We shall have to have butter," said Mr. Goddard. "It is impossible to eat bread without butter."

"There will be butter for tea, Monsieur," Malou assured him, wondering whether or not Mlle Rose would have time to make it. "If she hasn't time I'll take Pataud and the cart and go down to Ninon's. I know she'll go to the village for us."

Ninon was Malou's best friend. She and her brothers and sisters lived in another old house just a little way down the road. Nothing in the world pleased Ninon so much as to seat herself in Malou's little dog wagon and drive Pataud down to the village of Chexbres. Malou knew this and she knew also that nothing pleased Pataud so much as to be harnessed to his rickety two-wheeled cart. "Dear old Pataud," thought Malou as she passed the fruit to the Goddards.

"Faithful old Pataud. He loves to be useful. He'll take Ninon to the village for the butter, I know he will."

Mrs. Goddard was making faces and pointing out the window. She was trying to say that she would like to have her coffee on the terrace.

"They'll see the view now," Malou thought, hurrying outdoors to arrange the chairs. She brought up a yellow one for Mrs. Goddard and a bright green one for Mr. Goddard. "They'll see the roses, too, and a corner of the vegetable garden." She had just finished arranging the cups and saucers and putting some enormous clover blossoms into a vase when the Goddards came out.

"Might I ask what that noise is, that extraordinary squeaking? It has been going on ever since we arrived," said Mrs. Goddard. "What is it, please, my dear? And is it likely to continue?"

Malou did not know what to say. "I'll have to tell her about Grandpère," she thought. "She will understand how it is with old people."

But Mrs. Goddard did not understand. She could not understand why anyone should make such a noise.

"I shall ask him not to play any more,

Madame. Perhaps I shall be able to make him stop. He really is a dear, but he doesn't understand things very well any more." Malou was about to pour Mrs. Goddard's coffee. "Will you have two lumps or one, Madame? And will you have cream?"

"Thank you, I am not taking coffee. You need not wait. Mr. Goddard can pour his own." Mrs. Goddard was not unpleasant; she was just like a great big wind-up doll that moves about and speaks without feeling anything at all.

Malou cleared away the luncheon things, helped Mlle Rose in the kitchen, called Pataud, harnessed him to his cart, and drove him down to Ninon's house.

Ninon's house looked very much like Malou's except that it was pale blue instead of pink and had only one story instead of two. Ninon's father made wine and he had vines growing everywhere, not only on the hillsides but all over his house, stables, barns, and stone walls. That is why the house was blue, because when Ninon's father sprayed the vines the blue copper spray would run over the walls. Ninon's mother grew roses. She let them climb over every inch of the house and stone walls where her husband had no grapevines. Her roses were usually

pink. The house fascinated Malou. She had drawn it many times and once she had painted it in water colors, but she had tried to put Ninon into the picture and the dark blue of her dress had run down the sides of the light blue house and spoiled everything.

"I wish I had time to paint it again now," Malou thought as she jogged down in the little cart behind Pataud. "I would leave Ninon out and put in just the roses. I wish I had time."

Ninon was taking care of her three-year-old brother, Noël, when Malou arrived. But Ninon was delighted at the idea of driving to Chexbres; she said she could take Noël with her. Noël was pleased, too. When Ninon put him into the cart he began to bounce up and down. Cri-Cri and Robie would have liked to go, but Malou explained to them that their sister had to go alone with Noël, that if they all went the cart would be too heavy for Pataud to pull up the hill.

"I'll take you both next time," Malou promised. "Come on, let's climb up on the wall to wave good-bye to Ninon."

Robie was eight and he could climb the wall by himself, but Cri-Cri was only six and had to be helped. Malou lifted her up, scrambled up beside her, and they all stood there waving.

Pataud looked back at Malou and wagged his heavy tail, as much as to say, "Aren't you coming?"

"I can't come to-day, Pataud," Malou called to him. "There are guests at The Six Cats. Hurry back and I'll give you a large bone for tea."

Pataud turned around just once more; then he settled himself in his harness and headed for the village. Pataud was a dog of responsibilities; he knew when he had work to do.

Malou waited until the cart was out of sight; then she said good-bye to Robie and Cri-Cri and trudged back up the hill. She could not resist stopping by the way to pick one or two wild flowers, a tiny jack-in-the-pulpit, one called "stop-the-beef," and one or two sprays of forget-me-nots which the Swiss children name "mouse's ears." She was in the stable, however, squirting the hose vigorously on the Goddards's automobile within half an hour after Ninon and Pataud left for the village.

Samuel came in from the hay field before Malou had finished her difficult task. When he saw how wet she was, how she seemed to have played more water on herself than on the car, he burst out laughing and took awav the hose. "I'll

finish the car," he said, "if you'll go down for the wandering pigs. They went toward Julie's, as usual."

If Julie had ever had a last name everyone in the neighborhood had forgotten it, and Julie herself had not the least idea what it was. She was the oldest and the best laundress in the community. She did her washing outdoors in a trough like the one in which Pataud took his baths. The water in Julie's trough was as cold as ice, but she did not mind; her hands were as tough as a duck's foot. She seldom used soap, just rubbed and rubbed the clothes on a slab of stone. Julie was very strong; she did not seem to know what it was to feel tired and she could balance a basket of clothes or a tumble of hay on the top of her head without the least effort. Julie was over eighty and she looked like a good-natured chimpanzee.

Malou was fond of the old woman and liked to go down the steep path to her hut. Here and there along the way a stone wall kept the hillside from falling. In places it could not be seen because the stones were covered with vines and moss; insects and lizards lived there, and snails and limaces—huge very old snails with their round white houses on their backs, and

long reddish-brown limaces without any shells at all. Malou liked the snails, but in spite of the interesting lacelike silver trail that the limaces left behind them wherever they went, she could not like them; they were too slimy.

Julie's hut seemed to cling to the edge of the hillside as if it had taken root. The back door opened over a cliff and the only way to go out that door was to climb down a ladder. The front door opened onto the path. There were a great many things in front of the hut—sawhorses, wheelbarrows, a broken ladder or two, neat piles of logwood and fagots, flower pots, and bits of slate to mend the roof, any number of baskets and barrels, rakes, shovels, and brooms, a round-shaped haystack and square-shaped manure pile. Julie's brood of long-eared pigs lived just under the manure pile in a kind of muddy cave, where they had spent a great deal of time digging. Usually it was Julie's pigs who attracted Malou's pigs, but to-day Malou's pigs had gone far down the hillside, so far that it took Malou more than an hour to find them and drive them home. Of course it would have been easier if she had had Pataud; he would have hustled them up in no time. It was after five when she reached The Six Cats. Mlle Rose had served the God-

dards tea and commenced preparations for dinner.

"It doesn't matter a bit, dearest," Mlle Rose assured Malou. "Everything has gone beautifully; they liked their tea and they looked at the sunset. I think they may be contented."

Everything went smoothly at dinner. The Goddards enjoyed their butter and they must have enjoyed everything else, too, for they ate a great deal. Naturally it was difficult for Malou and Mlle Rose to tell very much about the Goddards because they spoke English to each other. After dinner they toasted their feet in front of Samuel's blazing fagots and did not seem to know that the north wind—the Bise, it is called in Switzerland—had brought cold weather. They even chatted a little in poor French with Michel. Mlle Rose and Malou thought this was a good sign. They believed that the first difficult day had passed without accident until Samuel came rushing into the kitchen to say that the hot-water boiler had sprung a leak.

This meant that the Goddards would not be able to take their baths.

CHAPTER III

Pataud Speaks out of Turn

IT MAY have been because they had not had their hot baths and it may have been because Grandpère had begun to play his fiddle at daybreak and it may have been because of the cold Bise that had blown hard all night. Whatever it was, the Goddards awoke in a bad humor.

They did not answer Malou's knock when she brought their breakfast to the room

She waited a moment, then pushed open the door and walked in.

Mr. Goddard was angry when he saw her. "Get out of here! What right have you to come walking into this room?" This he said in poor French. And changing to English he grumbled, "Beastly country this! Beastly! Children walking into your room without so much as a word!"

"Let her leave the breakfast, at any rate, dear," Mrs. Goddard answered, adjusting her green boudoir cap over her curl papers. And to Malou she said, "Please set the tray here." She motioned to the little table between the beds. "Thank you very much. Now you may go and please be careful not to let the door slam after you." Mrs. Goddard's French was even worse than her husband's but she seemed proud to be able to speak it at all.

Malou lifted the large napkin from the breakfast and placed the coffee pots conveniently near Mrs. Goddard.

"Goodness me," she exclaimed crossly. "Surely you don't call this breakfast. This bit of nothing! Why, there is not one thing here but coffee and rolls."

"Don't fuss," mumbled Mr. Goddard. "Get

rid of the child. We can have breakfast properly downstairs."

But Mrs. Goddard was not paying any attention to him; she was intent upon having more to eat. "Go downstairs, please. Bring us eggs and bacon and kippers." Mrs. Goddard did not know the French word for kipper, so she said it in English. "Here! Take the coffee with you and keep it hot. And take this hot milk; we don't use hot milk; please bring us cream. Take these rolls, too; have them heated. We cannot possibly eat cold rolls. And above all things, please have that dreadful noise stopped. It's been going on since five o'clock. Unless it is stopped at once we shall have to leave."

Malou's heart felt as if Mrs. Goddard had dropped a stone into it. She doubted if there were any fresh eggs. She did not have the least idea what a "kipper" was and she knew that there was not the slightest chance of stopping Grandpère's fiddling. It was a difficult moment. All Malou could do was smile and keep saying over and over again, "Yes, Madame. With pleasure, Madame. I am at your service." Then taking the coffee and the rolls she hurried away as fast as she could; she went so fast that she forgot the

door. It banged! Malou trembled all the way to the kitchen.

Mlle Rose shook her head. "We can heat the rolls easily, dear. There's plenty of cream and perhaps Samuel will have eggs. But what a 'kipper' is I am sure I do not know." Mlle Rose made a funny face over the word kipper and pronounced it "keeper." She was moving swiftly toward the door, and her soft felt slippers seemed to glide along like sleds. "There is only one thing to do with Grandpère and that is move him over into Samuel's farmhouse. The fiddling cannot be heard from there. I am sorry I did not think of it yesterday."

"Mademoiselle Rose!" Malou called, "they asked for bacon. What shall I do about that?"

"There is some bacon there, dear, hanging on the string in the corner. You may prepare it, Malou, while I move Grandpère."

Malou did not know how to cook bacon for breakfast. She had cooked it many times for dinner and luncheon, but she had never cooked it alone for breakfast. "I suppose," she said to herself. "you cut it in chunks and fry it in lard. I'll try." Poor Malou! The bacon cut in chunks and fried in lard smelled as if the hotel was on

fire; instead of getting crisp and brown, it just sizzled and spit and curled up in white bubbles. Malou cried over it. Fortunately, Samuel came in to see what was the trouble.

"Are there any eggs, Samuel? I must have two or three fresh eggs right away. Please get them for me. It's for the guests. Please, Samuel." Malou was peering at him through the clouds of greasy smoke.

"There was just one egg this morning," said Samuel sadly, "and I ate it." But he seemed more concerned about the smoke, which he was trying to sweep out of the kitchen with his round felt hat, than he was about the egg.

Mlle Rose came back now. "Open the windows and take that pan from Malou, Samuel; dump the grease outdoors. Malou, what on earth!" But Mlle Rose said no more. Through the smoke she saw the tears streaming down Malou's face.

In spite of all that Mlle Rose could do, the Goddards did not have their bacon; Malou had used all that there was in the house. Nor did they have their eggs nor their kippers. They did have hot rolls, however, and cream with their coffee, and a pot of Mlle Rose's best gooseberry marmalade. Perhaps they might have been pleased; perhaps they might have been able to forget that

they had not had their hot baths the night before and that there had been a squeaking noise early in the morning, and that the breakfast was what they considered scanty if—— If something else unfortunate had not occurred.

Pataud loved Malou in a way that only dogs can love. Silently, patiently, devotedly he followed her everywhere. He would have risked any danger for her, laid down his life for her without stopping to think a minute. This kind of unwavering heroism was in his blood. Pataud's ancestors had been Saint Bernards. But as Malou's life at The Six Cats was not in the least a dangerous life, Pataud did not have to risk his safety. So he spent his time just feeling all that Malou felt—when she was sad he was sad; when she was happy he almost smiled; when she was in a dreamy mood, off in the woods or fields painting perhaps, Pataud was dreamy, too, and lay at her feet gazing far off, feeling the beauty that she felt.

Pataud knew that Malou was troubled about something this morning; he felt it in his large bones. He was miserable. He longed to do something to help but he did not altogether understand the difficulty. He knew, of course, that the strange people upstairs had something to do

with Malou's sadness. Pataud had not liked them from the beginning. He was sure now that they had hurt her feelings and he decided that he would make an investigation.

He did.

While the Goddards were eating their lunch in the dining room Pataud sneaked upstairs and waited until their maid opened the door. Being nimble on his large feet, he was able to glide into the room without her seeing him. Then he lay down on his tummy and crawled under the bed. When the maid left the room Pataud began his investigation. He sniffed all the Goddards's things, and disliked them. These strangers were not the right sort. Pataud knew. "I shall tell them what I think of them," he said to himself, and lay down to wait.

When the Goddards opened the door they found themselves face to face with him!

The things that Pataud said and the way in which he said them struck terror to the marrow of the Goddards! They shrieked. Mlle Rose and Malou and Michel and Samuel came running to the rescue. But when the Goddards recovered from their fright they flew into a tantrum. Nothing anyone could say had the least effect. They decided to leave.

Malou spent a miserable hour while the packing took place; she spent it with her arms around Pataud's neck, whispering into his ear, burying her face in his shaggy fur, scolding him and telling him how bad he was, how utterly unworthy of his ancestors' blood!

Pataud was crushed; rolling his large dark brown eyes at his mistress, he implored forgiveness.

The Goddards left directly after tea; they paid their bill but they gave nothing to Mlle Rose or Samuel, and just as they were settling themselves in the car with all their great heavy bags they said, "That hotel is not fit to live in."

If they had struck Malou they could not have hurt her more.

Samuel stood gazing after the car and shook his head. "I wish," he murmured in his long gray beard, "that I had washed that car." Dear old Samuel! He knew he had been disagreeable and was sorry. He took the blame for the Goddards's leaving upon himself.

Mlle Rose did exactly the same thing. Twisting the corners of her black apron, she swallowed the lump in her throat and said sadly, "If only I had had the sense to move Grandpère to the farmhouse last night! If only I had had the sense."

Michel said nothing, just settled himself in his corner to sulk.

"The hotel is not fit to live in." It was this that sounded in Malou's ears. Over and over again she heard it, and the ugly tone in which it had been spoken. "If The Six Cats is not fit to live in, if people do not like it any more, it's my fault. Everyone loved to come when Papa was here. Papa knew how to please. Papa knew how!"

This was what Malou was thinking as she watched the Goddards's automobile roll down the hill. "I wonder what I do wrong? I wonder why people do not come, and if they do, why it is that they do not stay." Poor little Malou! Like Samuel and Mlle Rose, she was taking the blame upon herself. And Pataud—thoroughly ashamed of himself—hung his head and refused his tea.

But just when everyone was at the point of tears, just when there did not seem to be a cheerful thing left in the world, the wind shifted and a gentle southwest breeze filled the valley with mist and sent it hurrying up to the mountain tops. All the trees and shrubs, flowers and grasses, smelled sweet and wet. The vineyards on the hillside put on their deepest turquoise,

and the lake turned violet. "We can't stand here idle, Pataud," Malou whispered to her friend, "when the world is so beautiful. Let's go and paint. Let's go down to Ninon's. Let's see if we can paint the roses when they are soft and misty. They will be hard to do, but never mind. Hurry up! Stop looking so glum. Come on! You can pull me down in the cart."

It is easy for people who love to work to be happy. It was easy for Malou. Sitting on the stone wall surrounded by Ninon, Robie, Cri-Cri, and Pataud, Malou forgot the Goddards, forgot that the hotel was not fit to live in.

Robie was asking questions as usual. "What's the pink for, Malou? Why are you putting blue there? Are you going to paint the roses? Why don't you put Pataud in the picture?"

But Malou paid no attention. The color of the roses was difficult to mix and it had the same horrid way of running into the blue of the walls that Ninon's dress had had the first time Malou had tried to paint it. She worked hard until the light began to fade. Then she went indoors to spend the evening with Ninon and her family.

After supper they all helped Ninon's mother with the dishes and put baby Noël to bed.

Noël did not want to go to bed, so this took a long while—so long that there was no time left to play checkers. "We can play to-morrow, perhaps; I will come over to The Six Cats for lunch," Ninon suggested.

Malou was getting ready to go home. She was hanging a small, pink paper lantern with a candle in it on Pataud's cart. "I have to go to Lausanne to-morrow with Mademoiselle Rose," she said. "I'm sorry. I'll see you surely the day after."

"Wait a minute, Malou," Ninon's mother called to her. "Ninon's father will ride up with you. I'm afraid to have you on the road after dark on account of the automobiles." Ninon's mother was standing in the doorway, peering anxiously into the dusk.

"I'd like to have Monsieur," Malou called out, "but I'm not a bit afraid. I have Pataud, you know. Nothing can happen to me with Pataud."

Pataud wagged his heavy tail.

The little paper lantern was lighted and flickering merrily. Malou and Ninon's father were seated in the cart. Malou was holding Pataud's reins in one hand and her painting in the other. The stars shone and a great white moon came

riding up the valley of the Rhone. "That's one thing I can never paint, no matter how hard I try," Malou said to herself as they wound slowly up the hill. "But I've succeeded with the roses. They are the best I have ever done. They look wet, just as if the mist was really on them." Malou was happy again. When she found Mlle Rose she hugged her and whispered, "Isn't it the most beautiful night you have ever seen? It's like fairyland! Aren't we lucky to have it all for our own?"

CHAPTER IV

The Horrid Secret!

TO WALK down to Cully was half the fun of going to Lausanne. The same narrow stony path that led to Julie's hut twisted and turned and tumbled all the way down to Cully and the shores of the lake. Malou was fond of that path. She liked the smell of it, a kind of wet-earth, woody smell. Pataud enjoyed it, too. He knew, of course, that he could not go farther

than Cully, because he would not be allowed on the tram, but he did not mind waiting in the village until Malou returned. Pataud knew a disagreeable old dog there with whom he wished very much to have a few words. Mlle Rose and Malou carried baskets. They had to carry them when they went to town because there were so many things to bring home. "You haven't told me yet why we are going," said Malou. They were just passing Julie's hut, and Malou was looking around to see if their pigs were there. But they were not; just Julie's were in their muddy hole. "Why are we going?" Malou asked again. "Can't you tell me now?"

Mlle Rose did not answer. She saw Julie standing in the doorway and called out to ask if there were any things she wanted in Lausanne.

Julie had never been to Lausanne. She had never even thought about going, and she had never wanted anything from the city because she had not the slightest idea what there was there to want. Once or twice a year the old woman went to the village of Chexbres for provisions. These simple expeditions provided all the entertainment Julie wanted.

"If you stop in to see me on your way home," she called out, "I'll have some biscuits for you."

Mlle Rose called back that they would if there was time. They made their way past Julie's hut; then, skirting the old stable and neglected apple orchard, they came out into the open fields. Malou could not understand why Mlle Rose would not answer her question. Mlle Rose usually answered all questions. "Why are we going to Lausanne?" Malou asked again. "It's been only six weeks since we went the last time. Surely there can't be very much needed at The Six Cats. Why are we going?"

Mlle Rose's eyes were sad; she did not seem to realize she was letting Malou see that she was worried. She shifted her basket to the other arm and reached out for Malou's hand. "I can't tell you, Malou, why we are going to Lausanne, and I want you to promise me that you will not ask again."

Malou was hurt. It was the first time that Mlle Rose had made her feel that there was a secret at The Six Cats. And she could not help asking once more, "Is there anything wrong?"

"Nothing but what will turn out right in the end, I hope," Mlle Rose answered.

Malou thought a minute and said, "Has it anything to do with me?"

Mlle Rose nodded.

"Then why can't you tell me, Mademoiselle Rose? You've always told me everything. You've——" But Malou said no more for she felt that she was making it hard for Mlle Rose. Not thinking that she could hear, Malou murmured under her breath, "I wonder why she won't tell me."

Mlle Rose heard this and answered Malou in a quiet, gentle way, "I cannot tell you because I promised Michel that I would not say anything. You would not have me break my word, would you, Malou?"

"No," she answered, "I would not have you break your word. And I did not mean to ask out loud. I'm sorry."

They spoke no more of it, but Malou's heart was heavy and Mlle Rose could scarcely see the mud and stones under her feet because of the tears in her eyes.

"Look at Pataud!" said Malou. "He smells rabbits! Look at him! He's acting like a foolish puppy!"

Pataud was dashing around in circles. He was whiffling and snorting and making leaps in the air. If he had seen a rabbit he would not have harmed it; he was just amusing himself—the

smell of rabbits excited him. But he knew, of course, that it was against the law in the canton or department of Vaud to enter a vineyard under any circumstances. Nothing would have made Pataud jump the stone wall to chase the rabbit in the vineyards. He was just playing his rabbit game.

"Look at him, Mademoiselle Rose," Malou said again. "Isn't he silly? Isn't he the best old dog that ever lived?"

Mlle Rose smiled. It hurt her to see Malou being so brave. "Any other child would keep on asking questions," Mlle Rose thought.

They had to wait in Cully almost an hour for the tram and it was nearly noonday by the time they reached the outskirts of Lausanne. As the little trolley was tugging up the long steep hill leading into the city, Mlle Rose said, "I am going to get off at the Avenue de Villamont for half an hour or so. Will you go into the city and wait for me in the Place St. François? I'll not be long and as soon as I have finished I'll come for you and then we can go to lunch."

Never in all her life had Malou known Mlle Rose to act so strangely. There had never been secrets like this. Malou felt very much like crying, but she smiled instead and said, "I'll feed

the pigeons on the church steps. Don't hurry. I'll not be lonely and I'll not mind waiting. My friend with the *fiacre* will be there. I'm going to talk to him.

A *fiacre* is an open carriage to hire. Not many men in Switzerland drive them now; most hackmen drive taxis. But Malou's friend was a very old man; he disliked taxis very much and would not have given up his horse even if he could have afforded an automobile. His name was Hugo—a long-bearded, thin-faced man with bright blue eyes who always held his whip in his hand, even if he was just sitting on the church steps waiting for customers. He would amuse himself by drawing the lash of his whip along the pavement to make the pigeons jump over it. He used his whip more for this than he did for his horse. The horse's name was Pierro; he was Hugo's best friend. Under no circumstances did Hugo whip the elderly Pierro.

He was delighted to see Malou and set the pigeons to jumping immediately.

"I bought some *croissants* at the baker's," she told him. "Let's divide them and give the pigeons the crumbs if they jump well," she said, and showed her two crescent moon-shaped rolls to Hugo.

"You need not give me any," he said. "Keep them for yourself and the pigeons."

Malou insisted that he take half. "*Croissants* are hard to make. Mademoiselle Rose has been trying to teach me for over a month and I haven't learned yet. Either I make them too dry and they fly into bits, or too soggy and they would make you ill if you ate them. Mademoiselle Rose says that they should be like the top ridges of a tart, only not sweet. These are good."

Malou was sitting beside Hugo on the church steps. Hundreds of pigeons were fluttering around them.

"How's the hotel? Are there any guests?" Hugo asked, crumbling the end of his *croissant* for the pigeons.

Malou told him all about the Goddards. She became so interested in telling him that she forgot to eat her *croissant* and threw it all bit by bit to the pigeons.

Hugo shook his head sadly. "There are lots of people like that around these days. I have to drive them once in a while when they can't find taxis. They won't ride behind a horse if they can get an automobile. But I'm just as glad. They'd have my friend straining himself

on the mountainsides. I'm glad they prefer taxis."

"How is Pierro?" Malou asked, thinking to herself that the old horse looked very thin.

"He's not complaining and neither am I. We have enough to keep cool in summer and warm in winter. We're satisfied."

"I think I'll walk over to the flower market," Malou said. "I haven't anything more for the pigeons and I hate to keep telling them so. I'll be back in a minute."

"It's the noon hour," Hugo answered. "Pierro and I go home to rest. Perhaps I'll see you later this afternoon." Hugo had risen and was stretching his long crooked arms.

"Perhaps," said Malou, picking up her basket.

She threaded her way across the busy square. "Dear old Pierro," she thought. "When I go home I'm going to ask Samuel to send him an old fly net. I'm sure there's one in the stable."

All the flower women knew Malou and smiled up at her from beneath their small round black bonnets. Malou sat down beside them on the curbstone. She liked to be right in the midst of so many gay colors. She bought a bunch of forget-me-nots for Mlle Rose; they were es-

pecially pretty ones and their blossoms were turquoise blue, almost the color of the lake. For some strange reason, everything blue in that part of Switzerland seemed to be the same shade. Malou dipped the stems of the forget-me-nots into water and wrapped them in her handkerchief. "They are Mademoiselle Rose's favorite flower," she thought, as she went back to the church steps to wait for her.

Just opposite was a toy store, the largest, most expensive toy store in Lausanne. The window was filled with dolls and boats and games and books, tennis rackets, croquet sets, and large strange-looking rubber animals to be filled with air and ridden in the water. Any number of little things swung from strings in the ceiling; and the walls were lined with pictures, blocks, tea sets, embroidery outfits, and painting materials. Of all the things in that window Malou saw only the painting materials. "I'll have time," she thought, "to go over and look at them."

Fascinated, she stood looking in the window. There was a box of pastels with a hundred colors in rows on white cotton. Malou longed to touch them. They were the most beautiful pastels she had ever seen. And right next to them was a box of water colors in tubes! Malou had never

All the flower women knew Malou and smiled at her

seen water colors in tubes. They made her forget the horrid secret.

A number of American children went into the store and came out with packages. Malou was accustomed to the thought of strangers buying things, especially American children; she knew that they had a great deal of money to spend on whatever they wanted. It never occurred to Malou to wonder why other children should come out of the toy store with so many bundles, while she did not have money to buy more than two *croissants* and a small bunch of "mouse's ears." What she did think was that some day, if she worked hard enough and made The Six Cats pay, she would be able to buy a few of those pastels and perhaps a tube or two of water color. "I wonder," she thought, "if guests would come if I were to paint a sign and hang it up halfway down the hill to Chexbres. It would do no harm to try. I could put six cats on it, six black cats on a bright-colored background."

Very much out of breath Mlle Rose came hurrying up to where Malou was standing. "Did you think I was never coming? I hope you are not starved."

Malou seemed to have forgotten that the pigeons had eaten her *croissant*. "I'm not

hungry," she said. "Pierro and I had *croissant* on the church steps. And I've been looking at these paints. Did you ever see any like them, Mademoiselle Rose?"

Mlle Rose looked at the box of water colors.

"I forgot," said Malou, handing her the bouquet. "Here are some forget-me-nots for you."

"Mouse's ears," said Mlle Rose, and buried her face in the flowers. "Thank you, Malou. You should not spend your money on things for me. But I do like them."

As they made their way along the crowded sidewalk Malou told her about the sign. "Do you think it would be a good idea, Mademoiselle Rose? Do you think it would bring people to The Six Cats?"

Mlle Rose shook her head sadly. "I think," she said, "that if people are going to come they will come sign or no sign, and I'm sure that Michel would not approve of your spending money that way. He believes that no one will ever come."

Malou was disappointed. And very sadly she asked, "Are you discouraged, too, Mademoiselle Rose?"

"Everything is changed. I don't know. We are losing money. Why just the other day Michel was telling me——"

Malou interrupted. "The secret! Has it something to do with The Six Cats? Please answer me, Mademoiselle Rose."

She bit her lip, ashamed to feel that she had let Malou guess. "Michel will be angry if he knows I have been so stupid," thought Mlle Rose. "I must not say any more." She looked at Malou pathetically. "Let's not talk any more about it, Malou. Michel made me promise I should not say a word."

Malou was wretched.

"The Six Cats is mine. It's my very own. If anything happens to it I don't want to live any more," was all she said.

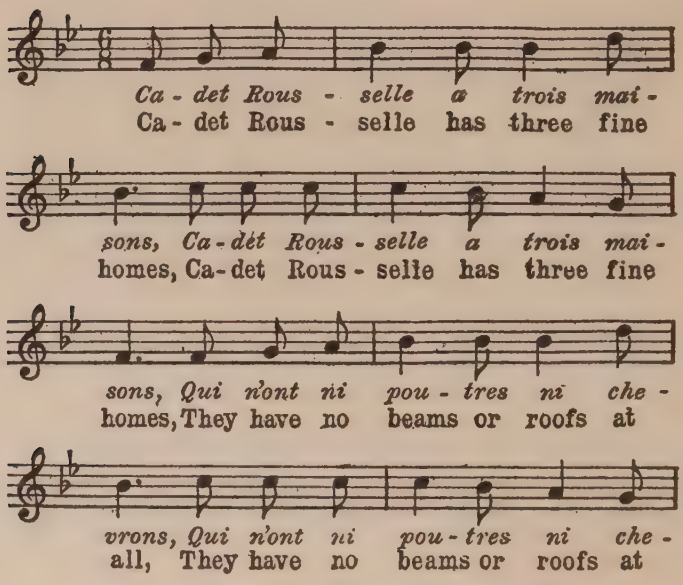
A bright red two-wheeled cart, pushed by a jolly-looking man dressed all in white, happened to draw up just at that moment. "It's the *glace* man, Malou," said Mlle Rose. "Would you like one? Even if it is just before lunch it doesn't matter. You may have one if you like."

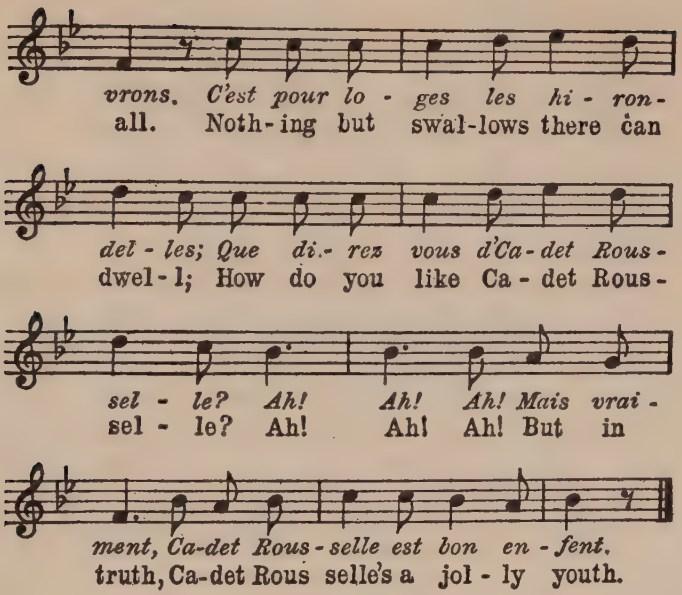
Next to Samuel's strawberries Malou would rather eat ice cream than anything else in the world. But the *glace* man and the excited group

of children around him did not interest her then. She was thinking of The Six Cats; some danger threatened her hotel, something which neither Mlle Rose nor Michel wished her to know.

Other children were joining the group around the ice cream man now. They had taken hands and were dancing round and round him in a circle, their feet swinging in rhythm to the song they sang:

CADET ROUSSELLE


Ca - det Rous - selle a trois mai -
Ca - det Rous - selle has three fine
sons, Ca - det Rous - selle a trois mai -
homes, Ca - det Rous - selle has three fine
sons, Qui n'ont ni pou - tres ni che -
homes, They have no beams or roofs at
vrons, Qui n'ont ni pou - tres ni che -
all, They have no beams or roofs at


vrons. C'est pour lo - ges les hi - ron -
all. Noth-ing but swal-lows there can
del - les; Que di.- rez vous d'Ca - det Rous -
dwel - l; How do you like Ca - det Rous -
sel - le? Ah! Ah! Ah! Mais vrai -
sel - le? Ah! Ah! Ah! But in
ment, Ca-det Rous - selle est bon en - fent.
truth, Ca-det Rous selle's a jol - ly youth.

Malou looked at them sadly. Not even the smiling *glace* man, inviting her to join in, tempted her. She was thinking of The Six Cats.

"Look," said Mlle Rose, "he is picking one of the geraniums from the pots on the top of his bright red wagon."

Sure enough! The jolly man was snipping off one of the blooms from the row of flower pots.

"I wonder why," Malou thought. Then she saw that he was coming toward her.

"Bright flowers are to cheer sad faces," he was saying.

Malou was very much ashamed that anyone should have seen her looking so gloomy. She smiled and took the flower. "Thank you. I will join the others," she said politely, and ran into the ring.

The *glace* man seemed pleased. Not only was it his business to sell ice cream but also to keep the children of Lausanne happy.

Mlle Rose watched Malou and wondered just how much the merriment would help to drive away the shadow from her mind. Mlle Rose also wondered, just a little fearfully, whether or not Malou had guessed that Michel was planning to sell The Six Cats and send her away to boarding school in Lausanne.

CHAPTER V

A Calf Is Named and a Wish Is Made

MLLE ROSE and Malou spoke no more of the unhappy secret.

When their tram from Lausanne rattled into Cully they found Pataud waiting for them.

He came bounding forward with a very wet, very forlorn kitten in his mouth. He had found the kitten in the gutter, picked it up, washed it,

carried it into a corner, and allowed it to sleep peacefully between his front paws.

Pataud might not have done this had it not been for his Saint Bernard ancestors. It was they who had given him his fine sense of wanting to protect. Since the Eleventh Century these ancestors had lived at the monastery of Saint Bernard that stands at the summit of the most perilous route in the Alps. It is the Saint Bernard pass and it leads from Switzerland into Italy. Countless travelers have perished in the storms that sweep this pass. The history of the monastery is an unbroken record of sacrifice and bravery on the part of the monks. But they could not have carried on their rescue work had it not been for the dogs. Pataud did not live on the Saint Bernard pass but Saint Bernard nobility was in his blood. He hoped some day to prove himself worthy. In the meantime he rescued kittens.

Malou took the tiny wet creature from Pataud's slobbering jaws. "There!" she said, "it was wonderful of you to take care of it, but Samuel will be angry when we bring it home. Samuel says he is tired of feeding cats; the last time we counted them there were fifteen."

Pataud wagged his heavy tail and gave the wet kitten another generous lick.

"Put the creature in my basket," said Mlle Rose. "I'll carry it. But hurry. We're late."

Malou gave Mlle Rose the kitten, and they started up the hill.

It had begun to rain; the path was slippery and the loose stones turned and rolled as they stepped on them; the mud became thick and heavy. It was tiresome walking. Their arms ached from the cramped position in which they had to hold the packages of sugar and soda under their coats to protect them from the rain. This, besides having to carry the heavy baskets, was really very difficult. Several times they had to sit down to rest and stretch their arms. At Julie's they stopped for biscuits.

When Samuel saw the kitten he made a face and suggested drowning it at once in the trough. He would have done so, too, if Malou had not promised to help him bring in the fagots in the morning.

"I'll ask Ninon and Robie to help, too," she coaxed, "really I will, Samuel. Please let the kitten stay. One more will make so little difference."

Samuel grumbled but he took the kitten to the stable and left it with several of the fifteen.

Malou kept her promise in the morning; the

rain had stopped and she drove down for the children in Pataud's cart. She found all four of them sitting on the wall eating slices of bread soaked in wine. Malou climbed up with them, ate half of Ninon's piece, and explained what she wanted them to do.

Everyone was eager to help. Even Cri-Cri and three-year-old baby Noël.

"Me, too, me love to fagot," Noël lisped.

Robie whistled a long whistle.

Ninon laughed. "A lot of fagots we'll get out if we have Noël with us," she said. "Why did you speak so loud, Malou? We'll have to take him now or he'll yell."

"I don't mind his coming," said Malou, "we can leave him with Pataud."

Upon hearing this Noël began bouncing up and down as if he were on springs.

"Stop that, young fellow," said Robie, "or I'll——" He kicked the air viciously by way of illustration of what he might do to Noël.

Noël was frightened so he kept still for almost three minutes.

All the children could not go in the cart, so Malou and Ninon walked, letting Robie ride and take care of Cri-Cri and Noël.

Samuel was waiting for them in the farm

wagon. "Hurry," he called to them. "Escargot and I have been waiting a long time. Leave Pataud and climb up here with me, all of you. We're going way down on the hillside in the orchard below Julie's hut."

"Don't want to det out! Don' want to leave doggie!" wailed Noël.

Lifting his rough boot, Robie again threatened his small brother, but without effect.

Noël continued to cry so that Malou and Ninon had to lift him out of the cart and set him up beside Samuel.

"See nice old horsie, nice old Escargot, nice old snail horse," said Ninon.

But Noël would not be comforted. He wanted to ride behind Pataud.

"Lot of work we'll get done with that!" growled Samuel.

Then Robie began his questioning. "Why are we going to get fagots? How much are we going to cut? Who are we doing it for, anyway? Why must we have fagots?"

"Silence, young man!" commanded Samuel, seizing Robie's throat with thumb and forefinger.

Robie gulped and was silent.

"Shall we let Pataud follow along with his cart?" Malou asked. "He might be able to help

take care of Noël while we are working." And seeing Samuel's nod she called, "Come, Pataud. You may follow us. But don't go too fast down hill. There's no one in your cart to put on the brakes."

"Let me go with Pataud," suggested Robie, delighted at the possible chance of being a moment or two late for work.

"No, sir!" commanded Samuel. "You come with us. We need you."

"Why?" asked Robie just to tease.

"Thunder!" said Samuel fiercely.

Then they started down the path to Julie's in silence and Pataud, looking worried, followed with the cart as best he could. He was clever enough to step sideways to keep the cart from running over him on the steep grades.

They set to work about ten o'clock, and no one did more than Pataud, who played nurse for Noël.

Samuel cut the branches off the trees. The children gathered them as they fell, cut them into neat lengths and bound them with cord. Of course Samuel cut only the low, dead branches. Anything else in Switzerland is too valuable to use for kindling wood.

Everyone worked hard and accomplished a

great deal in the first two hours. Noël was contented sitting in Pataud's cart, and, curling himself into a ball, he finally fell asleep. But when he woke he was in such a bad humor that Ninon had to stop binding fagots to take care of him.

Then Robie began, "When do we have lunch? I'm hungry. I don't want to bind any more fagots."

And not even Pataud pulling Noël round and round in circles could stop his fretting.

"What is there to eat, anyway?" grumbled Samuel.

"Eggs, sardines, *croissants*, lettuce, and wine!" Malou answered. "Mademoiselle Rose gave us the best she had. It's a real picnic!"

This tempting description of the lunch put an end to work. They all hurried to Julie's, washed their hands in her trough, dried them on some moss, and raced back to the basket of goodies.

Pataud behaved most strangely. Instead of poking his nose into the sardines and the *croissants*, he kept sniffing the air. Before lunch was finished he ran down the hillside toward the lower pasture. No one thought very much about his going except Malou, but she knew that something was in the wind. "He'll come back," she

thought. "I'm sure he'll come back to tell me what he is doing."

While they were gathering up the fragments of the lunch to put them away in the basket, Pataud bounded upon them in a great state of excitement.

"Woof! Wooof!! Woooof!!!" he announced, and caught hold of Samuel's trouser leg.

Samuel looked down at Pataud with a puzzled expression. "What's the matter with him, Malou? Do you understand?"

"Yes. He wants you to follow him somewhere. He's seen something and he wants to show it to you," explained Malou.

Samuel gave one longing look at the fagots; he wanted dreadfully to get them in that evening and he knew that every interruption made it less likely. He had not wanted to stop for lunch and had consented only because he knew how hungry the children were. But to go off, goodness only knows where, with Pataud was the last thing Samuel wished to do. "You go, Malou," he said. "Take Ninon. You go! I'll stay and cut. I want these fagots in before nightfall."

Malou suggested to Pataud that he might let go of Samuel's trousers and take her with him instead of Samuel.

But Pataud paid not the least attention. The more Malou pleaded with him to take her, the more he insisted upon having Samuel.

Samuel was really very much annoyed; he began to grumble, but nevertheless he laid down his saw and strode off after Pataud, who sprang ahead barking noisily, eager to show the way.

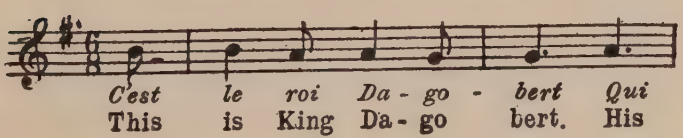
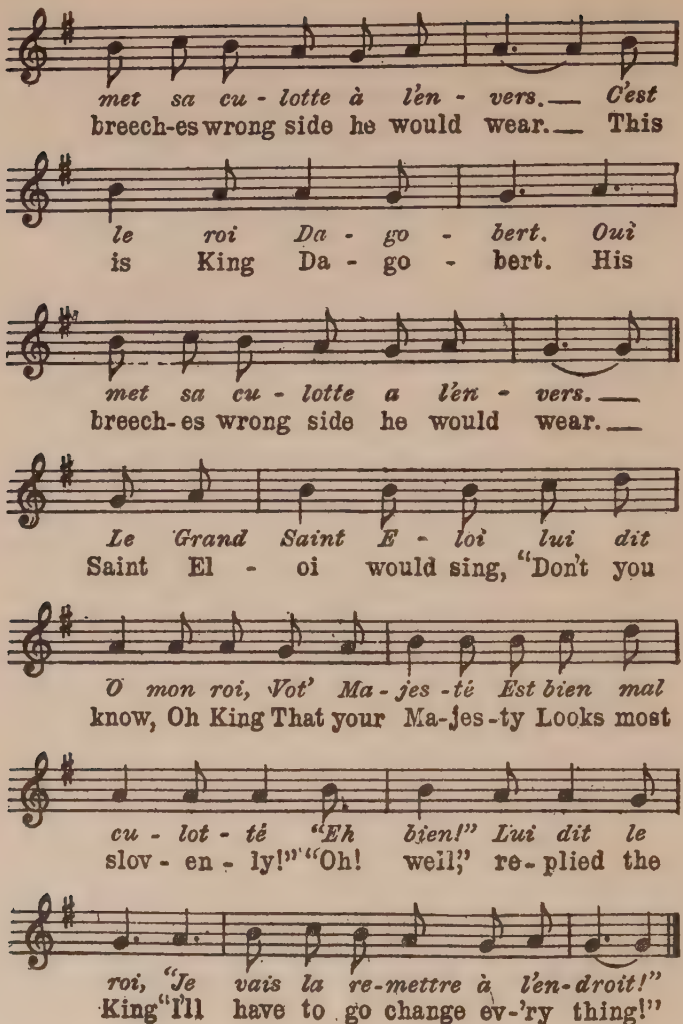
Everyone forgot Noël in the excitement and left the small boy alone in the cart. But he did not intend to be deserted. When he saw the others hurrying away he opened his small round mouth and yelled.

Neither Ninon nor Cri-Cri nor Robie paid the least attention to him. Noël might have screamed until his chubby face turned purple had not Malou turned back to him.

"I'll stay with you, Noël," she called to him. "Don't cry. I'm coming to you. Don't cry."

She certainly hated not to see what was going on down the hillside, but she could not leave Noël in such an unhappy state. Very gently she lifted him in her arms and began to sing to him:

C'EST LE ROI DAGOBERT



met sa cu - lotte à l'en - vers. — *C'est*
breech-es wrong side he would wear.— This
le roi Da - go - bert. *Oui*
is King Da - go - bert. His
met sa cu - lotte a l'en - vers. —
breech-es wrong side he would wear.—
Le Grand Saint E - loi lui dit
Saint El - oi would sing, "Don't you
O mon roi, Vot' Ma - jes - té Est bien mal
know, Oh King That your Ma-jes-ty Looks most
cu - lot - té "Eh bien!" Lui dit le
slov - en - ly!" "Oh! well," re - plied the
roi, "Je vais la re-mettre à l'en-droit!"
King "I'll have to go change ev-'ry thing!"

When the song was ended Noël teased, "More! More! Me want more!" There was no stopping him.

But Malou did not feel like singing; she wanted to listen to find out if possible what was happening down the hillside.

"More! More!!" Noël pleaded. "Me want more! Me want more!"

Malou sang another old song about the father who married his daughter to a man who was so small that the cat mistook him for a mouse and ran away with him.

"More!"

But Malou sang no more. She heard the others coming, and gathering Noël in her arms she ran to meet them.

Pataud, happy and proud, came first; then Samuel with the smallest, youngest kind of calf in his arms. Behind Samuel came Ninon, Robie, Cri-Cri, and the proud mother cow.

"Must have been born last night," said Samuel, "way down the hillside, too. Don't suppose the mother knew how to get it up. It's a good thing Pataud found them."

"Why?" asked Robie.

"'Cause a mother cow needs shelter with a calf as young as this one," Samuel answered, smoothing down the hair on the calf's back.

"Would it have died if it had not been for Pataud?" asked Cri-Cri.

"It might have if we had had a cold storm," Malou explained.

Samuel was putting the calf into Pataud's cart.

Malou patted him affectionately. "I wish I were as wise as you are," she whispered in his ear. "I wish you'd teach me to be a Saint Bernard."

Pataud presented his paw as much as to say, "Shake hands. If people could be Saint Bernards I'm sure you'd be one."

The new calf put an end to the fagot cutting. Everyone went back to the hotel. Noël insisted upon riding in the cart with the calf. The others rode behind Escargot.

"Oh," exclaimed Mlle Rose when she saw the baby calf. "It's the smallest one I ever saw."

"Yes, and if it had not been for Pataud's wonderful nose we would not have known anything about it." Malou was never tired of singing Pataud's praises. "What shall we call it?" she asked Mlle Rose. All the children stood round, eagerly waiting to hear her answer.

Mlle Rose put her pretty head on one side to think a minute. "Let's call it 'Mignonne'; it's such a tiny creature."

Ninon liked the name. But Malou said, "No, I have an idea; let's name it 'America' and make a wish that some Americans come to the hotel."

Samuel was disgusted. "Why not wish for the plague?" he muttered.

This made Malou angry. "You should not say such things, Samuel! I'm sure there are many very pleasant Americans. I wish they would come to the hotel."

Samuel said nothing more, just gathered up the new-born calf and carried it to the stable.

"Its name," said Malou to Mlle Rose and the children, "is going to be 'America.' And, Samuel," Malou called after him, "will you let me have that old fly net in the corner of the hay barn? I want to send it to my friend Hugo for his horse."

Samuel was glad of an excuse to turn around and smile. He was just a little ashamed of being so disagreeable about the Americans. "I'll get the net," he said, "as soon as I have put America and his mother into a stall."

That settled it. The calf was named "America." Malou looked at Mlle Rose. "Make a wish, won't you? Make the one that we both want."

Mlle Rose closed her eyes and made a wish. Malou closed hers, too. And they both wished that Americans would come to the hotel.

CHAPTER VI

Americans!

THE Americans probably would have come anyway, even if the wishes on the calf had not been made. But it did seem a little as if America had something to do with their coming.

Samuel was bringing in the hay from the lower field. Mlle Rose had gone to Julie's to help her with the wash. Even Michel was out; he had ridden to Chexbres to buy tobacco. No one but

Malou and Grandpère were home. They were sitting on the terrace in the sunshine. Grandpère was fiddling and Malou was darning stockings. Pataud was lying by the front door; it was he who heard the automobile first. He leaped up and ran to tell Malou.

Even before Malou saw the automobile she knew by the sharp shriek of the horn that it was an American make. "Oh, Pataud! It's an American car! It's coming here!"

Pataud would have liked to say, "Certainly. I heard it first."

There were five people in the car, a lady, a gentleman, a little girl about Malou's age, a boy slightly older, and a chauffeur. Malou was so excited that she forgot to lay down her mending. Her apron was bulging with stockings. Her face was not so clean as it might have been. Her pigtails were a little fuzzy, and her blue calico dress very much rumpled. But she did not think of this. She thought of only one thing. The wish had come true: Americans had come! Then she remembered that no one was home to do anything for them! No one to take their bags! No one to talk to them about rooms! Malou looked at the bags; they were as large as trunks. "I'll never be able to lift them!" she thought.

"I don't believe I can even pull them out of the car."

But there was no time to stand around or to think. The car had stopped, the Americans were getting out. Malou began to tug at one of the heavy bags.

Both the lady and gentleman were speaking English; they took it for granted that Malou understood, and they spoke very fast.

Malou could not understand anything they said.

"Where's the porter? Isn't there someone to take our bags? Call the porter, little girl. Surely there must be someone here to take our things!" It was the lady who said this; she seemed very nervous.

Malou just smiled and kept on tugging at the bags. But the American boy stopped her. "They are too heavy for you," he said in perfect French. "The chauffeur and I can take them. Please do not try to move them."

"Are there any rooms in the hotel? Do you know if we can get accommodations? We tried to telephone and couldn't. I hope you have rooms. Do you happen to know if there is anyone here for us to talk to?" All this was in English.

And the gentleman was speaking so fast that he had lost his breath.

Malou caught the English word "room," and guessed what he had said. "Yes, yes, Monsieur," she said eagerly in French. "We have rooms." She showed the way into the little office.

The gentleman kept on talking.

"Father wants to know about the rooms," said the boy.

"Yes, and he wants to talk to the proprietor," added the little girl.

Malou was happy to hear the children speak French. "I can show your father the rooms," she said. "I am the proprietor; it's my hotel."

The boy smiled at Malou. But the little girl said, "You! The proprietor! You!"

The boy nudged his sister and whispered, "Be careful. You'll hurt her feelings."

Malou could not hear what he said, but whatever it was she felt it to be something friendly. "It was my father's hotel. But it belongs to me now." Malou wanted the boy to understand.

"Poor 'kid'!" he was thinking. "Her father must be dead."

The chauffeur was asking questions and Malou caught the word "garage." "Tell him for me, will

you," she said to the boy, "that he may put the car in the stable just opposite; it's the low building with the vines. We have no garage, but the stable is empty. I think it will do nicely."

The boy interpreted this for Malou.

"Thank you very much," she said with a smile.

Both the mother and father were shouting at Malou in English. They seemed to think that if they spoke loud enough they could make her understand.

"She isn't deaf, Mother; she doesn't understand English," the boy explained. "If you will tell me what you want to say I'll do the best I can to say it for you in French."

His sister snickered.

But he paid no attention, just interpreted all that Malou said about rooms and prices. When he explained about there being no private baths Malou's heart thumped. She believed they would go away. But they did not; they just looked gloomy.

"My name is Tom," said the boy after the arrangements were made. "I'm sorry my French is so poor. What's your name?"

"My name is Malou. I think your French is very good. If it had not been for you I should have been dreadfully frightened."

Malou was taking the new guests upstairs. She was apologizing for the dust on the steps. "I did not have time this morning to scrub the hall."

"Do you mean to say that you keep this place clean? Don't tell me that you scrub floors! Isn't there anyone here to help you?" He was looking at Malou in astonishment.

She told Tom about Mlle Rose and Samuel, and she explained again that it was her hotel, and that she really liked to work.

He looked at her and gave a long whistle. "Gee!" he said, "I think you're a sport!"

"As soon as I show you the rooms I'll go for Mademoiselle Rose so that you may have a good lunch. I'm not a first-class cook. And I should be frightened getting lunch for so many of you."

"Can you cook?" Tom was more surprised than ever.

"I love to cook," Malou answered simply.

"How old are you?"

"Twelve," answered Malou.

Again he whistled. He was about to say something else but they came to the room that was to be his mother's and father's.

It was the balcony room, the same that Mr. and Mrs. Goddard had occupied. Malou held

open the door. "If we had known you were coming we would have opened the windows. I am afraid it is very stuffy." She went over, pushed open the heavy iron shutters, and showed the balcony. "The view is pretty from here; at sunset the snow on the mountains turns pink."

The boy interpreted this for Malou.

"Thank you very much," she said, and smiled again.

Pataud, who had followed them, was standing in the corridor making up his mind about the guests. He had accepted the boy immediately, one sniff had been sufficient; but Pataud was doubtful about the others.

"No bath! Great clumsy feather beds! No carpet on the floor! Wash basins! If there is anything in the world I dislike it's a wash basin! It makes me feel as if I were living in a shack to have one of those out-of-date things in the room."

The boy did not interpret what his mother had said.

"Ask that child," his mother continued, "whether any of the rooms have electric light. I shall never be able to stand candles."

Tom pretended not to hear his mother. And he was glad that Malou could not understand. He followed her into the adjoining room.

"There is no balcony in this room or in the one next to it, but you can see the lake almost as well from the windows." Malou was sorry that the boy and his sister were not to have a balcony.

The little girl had followed, too, and was standing by the window staring at Malou's bulging apron.

Malou saw her and was ashamed. "Oh! I forgot to take the stockings out of my apron. I'm sorry." Then she remembered that her pigtails were fuzzy, that her face was smudged, and her dress rumpled. She felt the blood rushing to her cheeks and apologized again. "I should have been tidy if I had known you were coming. I hope you will excuse me."

"Do you know how to sew?" asked the little girl's mother in poor French. "I wish that my daughter could sew. All girls should know how. I'm sure that you do, my dear." This to Malou.

"Oh, yes," she answered, smiling. "I sew a great deal. I like it very much."

The little American girl yawned; the subject of sewing did not interest her in the least. "No one has to do things like that in America," she said. "No one has time, and besides it's so much easier to buy things that are made."

"It's easy for you," said her brother. "You've

got lots of money, but what about people who haven't?"

His sister yawned again and said, "I'm starving. When do we have lunch?"

"Lunch in a hurry!" thought Malou, feeling somewhat frightened. But she faced the American girl and said pleasantly, "Lunch will be ready at one. There will be two bells, one fifteen minutes before and the other just when lunch is served. I'll bring you some tea now if you are hungry." Malou was remembering the Goddards.

"Thanks; I don't like tea," said the little girl, turning away from Malou to look out of the window.

"Why couldn't you be more friendly?" asked her brother when Malou had gone, but his sister did not answer, just shrugged her shoulders.

Malou ran all the way down to Julie's hut for Mlle Rose, and together they raced excitedly up the hill. There was not a moment to lose if lunch was to be ready by one.

They found Pataud standing by the kitchen door looking as if he would like to be of some use. "I'm going to send him for Samuel," said Malou, and she scribbled on a scrap of paper, "Come quick! Guests!" This she tied around Pataud's neck and told him to run down to Samuel. "In

the lower field, Pataud! Go as fast as you can!"

Pataud sniffed, wagged his tail, and trotted off.

He returned with Samuel within half an hour. Together they brought in fagots and logwood for Mlle Rose's kitchen stove.

Fortunately, there was plenty in the pantry, butter, eggs, and fortunately, the fresh supplies that Malou and Mlle Rose had brought with them from Lausanne.

Mlle Rose took three minutes to make up her mind what she would give the Americans to eat. She cocked her head on one side and thought hard. "Take those pea pods, Malou, and chop them as fine as you can for the soup. Then grate some cheese. Grate it very fine; we don't want lumpy cheese in this soup."

Malou set to work. She liked to hear the chop, chop of the knife beating in the old wooden bowl. It was fun to scrape cheese, too, and to watch it crawl, worm fashion, through the grater. Malou did not take long with these tasks.

"Now," said Mlle Rose, when she saw that Malou had finished with the cheese and the pea pods, "cut the macaroni into small pieces; we'll cook it with squares of bacon for the second course."

Malou enjoyed cutting macaroni, too; she liked to see if she could pull it from the blue wrapper without breaking it, and she thought it was fun to snip off tiny bits with Mlle Rose's kitchen shears.

"What table shall I set for them, Mademoiselle Rose? The one by the window, don't you think? They won't mind the glare. And don't you think I might use the best cloth? The one that's upstairs in the cubby?"

Mlle Rose had no objections, so Malou ran up for the cloth and spread it on the table by the window before you could say "Jack Robinson." She arranged a huge bowl of phlox and put it in the center of the table, and she took particular pains with the silver, laying it in perfect position. Then she polished the glasses until they shone like soap bubbles. When this was done she stood looking at the table for several seconds to be sure that she had forgotten nothing. "Now I'll run down to see if Mademoiselle Rose wants me to do anything for her before I change my apron." Malou skipped along the corridor.

Mlle Rose gave her a steaming pot of boiled potatoes to sprinkle with chopped parsley and a roast of veal to carve into thin slices. While

Malou was doing this Mlle. Rose mixed the salad dressing for the lettuce and washed a heaping bowl of Samuel's strawberries. "Now," she said, wiping her forehead with the end of her apron, "we are ready."

The Americans came as soon as the second bell rang. They seemed pleased with the table and they looked at the view. But they were surprised when Malou came in with the soup plates.

"You don't mean to say——"

"Surely, that child——"

"Why, she can't be more than twelve. Look at her! The tray's bigger than she is!"

Fortunately, all this was whispered in English.

"Keep still! Do! For pity's sake! She might understand!" said Tom.

But his sister paid no attention to him. In her best French she asked Malou, "Isn't there any waitress? Are you going to wait on us?"

"Mademoiselle Rose will be here in a minute," said Malou, trying hard not to spill the soup. There was something in the way this little American girl spoke that made Malou wish that she was much older.

The father was muttering half-French half-English sentences about a wine list.

"I'll call Michel," said Malou, glad of an excuse to run out of the room. She found Michel and told him to bring the wine list into the dining room.

"*Tiens!*" he murmured. Anything to do with wine pleased Michel.

Mlle Rose was taking away the soup plates when Malou came back. Mlle Rose looked fresh and clean and cool now in an organdy apron. No one would have imagined that it was she who had prepared lunch.

"Tell the chef that's tne best meal I have had since I reached Europe," said Tom.

"Thank you! I am sure she will be pleased." Mlle Rose winked at Malou and Malou, eager for a little joke, said, "Our chef isn't a chef at all; she's a lady."

The mother was asking Tom to ask Mlle Rose how they could make strawberries grow so large.

"It takes a long time," Mlle Rose explained. "Samuel has been preparing the soil in the strawberry bed for thirty years. I can remember when he laid out the bed; the berries were very small at first; every year they have grown larger."

Tom interpreted this to his mother, and Malou wondered, as she listened, why the American boy and girl could speak French so beautifully

while their mother and father could scarcely say a word.

The new guests had their coffee on the terrace. They thought it the most lovely terrace they had ever seen. They spoke about the garden and said that the phlox was the most brilliant in Europe. They liked the horse-chestnut tree too and this delighted Malou.

When she came out with the coffee she picked the American lady a bunch of yellow roses.

"*Merci beaucoup*," said the lady, and pronounced the second half of "beaucoup" as if it were "coop."

But Malou was pleased because the lady smiled.

"Is there a tennis court anywhere in the neighborhood? I'd love a game of tennis and then a swim down in the lake." Tom was gazing over the edge of the terrace. "How long would it take me to run down there and flop in the water? Not more than ten minutes, would it?"

Malou was enthusiastic. "It's only a short way! And we have a tennis court here. It needs rolling, but Samuel will attend to it for you and I'll put up the net. It's torn a little but I think you can use it."

"Three cheers! Hear that, Sis? There's a court

here." This he said in English, but Malou would have understood what he meant if he had spoken Chinese, for his face was radiant.

"I'm going for my racket," said his sister, jumping from her chair and hurrying across the terrace.

Tom followed her. "Let's ask her to play," he said in an undertone. "I'm sure she'd love to. Let's ask her."

"I don't mind," said his sister, "but I'm sure she doesn't know how. She doesn't seem to do anything but work."

"I'm going to ask her, anyway," said Tom, and he called to Malou, "Don't you want to come play with us?"

This was so exciting that Malou almost dropped the coffee tray. "I've never played tennis," she stammered. "But thank you very much for asking me."

"Oh, come along. We'll teach you in no time. It's not hard and it's lots of fun. Come along. You and my sister can play against me." Tom was really eager to have Malou; he thought it such a jolly idea to take her away from all the work just for once. "Come along," he said again, smiling gayly.

"I'm afraid I can't," she answered. "I have ever

so many things to do. But thank you so much."

"Perhaps some other time," he said, waving good-bye as he went to join his sister.

"What fun it must be to play games," thought Malou as she helped Mlle Rose straighten the dining room and draw the green shades to discourage the flies. She sighed. "I wish I could play tennis. I wonder what it's like."

But Malou never brooded over things that she could or could not do. Later in the afternoon, when her work was done, she went down to Ninon's to paint. Pataud took Malou down in the cart, and jogging all the way down the hill she planned how she could paint Ninon in the picture without letting the color of her dress run and spoil everything.

She found Ninon sitting on the wall all alone. "Come sit for me, will you? I want to see if I can put you in without making a single smudge."

"Wait a minute, Malou," said Ninon, liking the idea, "I'll put on my Sunday dress." She was back in three minutes, looking very sweet in her dark blue skirt, black velvet bodice, white kerchief, and orange-colored apron.

"If I can only paint you, Ninon," said Malou, "it will be a lovely picture. But I know it's going to be very hard to do."

Malou scarcely spoke a word while she was painting; she sat on the wall and worked so hard that she forgot all about not being able to play tennis with Tom and his sister.

And before the sun set the task was done. There was Ninon painted successfully, bright colors and all, without a single streak or smear.

CHAPTER VII

Tom Gives Malou a Present

THE sun was just coming up the next morning when Malou ran into the garden to gather strawberries for the Americans' breakfast. Never had the berries seemed sweeter than they did that morning when Malou pulled them, wet and cold with dew. She filled three small baskets and laid moist leaves across the top to keep the berries from losing that wonderful wet taste. "I know they will like them," she thought,

running into the kitchen to show them to Mlle Rose, who had been up since four o'clock making butter.

Mlle Rose sent Malou to the barn for eggs.

While she was crossing the yard she heard someone calling.

It was Tom. "Wait for me, will you? I saw you in the garden and I hurried down to see what on earth you were doing at this hour."

Malou turned round to look at him. He seemed so strong, so good-looking, almost like a Swiss boy who had spent his life on the mountains in the sunshine. "I hope I didn't make any noise in the garden," said Malou. "I hope I didn't wake you."

Tom laughed. "You didn't make any noise at all. I woke up, I suppose, because it was such a fine morning. I had the feeling that something was going on that I didn't want to miss. Then I saw you picking strawberries, so I decided to come down to find out how many other thousand things you do before breakfast."

Malou smiled. She felt that Tom understood. "If The Six Cats belonged to him, I'm sure he would like it as much as I do." Out loud she said, "I'm on my way for eggs. Would you like to come with me?"

"Never found an egg in my life. And I bet I won't find one this morning, but I'll come along."

"This is Pataud's house." Malou pointed to a snug corner of the barn. "But he never sleeps here any more. He's spoiled; he sleeps on my bed, right in the center, and takes up so much room that there is hardly any left for me. And this is the pigeons' home." Malou showed another comfortable nook. "The pigeons are happy here. Even when we open their door they do not want to go away for more than a few minutes. Samuel says we ought to eat them."

Tom peeked at the pigeons; they were sleepy-looking and making soft noises. "Must say I shouldn't care to eat them," he said.

"They're my pets," was all Malou said.

"How on earth do you get out here in the winter to take care of these young fellows?" Tom asked.

Malou explained that the barn connected with the hotel. "If we had to go outdoors we couldn't reach them for days on account of the snow. Lots of guests think it strange to have the barn joining the hotel, but they don't understand. They've never seen it here in winter."

"Ugh! Makes me shiver to think of it! But I bet it's great sport."

"It is," answered Malou, "and it's very beautiful, too, all white and still and sparkling."

They were in the chicken house now, hunting for eggs. But they found none. "Oh, dear!" said Malou. "I did so want eggs for your breakfast! You always have eggs for breakfast, don't you?"

"Sometimes," said Tom. "But if there are none it makes no difference."

Suddenly Malou thought of kippers and was afraid that the Americans might want some. "Please tell me, what is a 'keeper'?" she asked.

"Oh, some sort of horrid fish, I believe. I wouldn't eat one on a bet. None of us eat things like that for breakfast at home," Tom explained.

"What do you eat?"

"Oh, cereal, bacon, fruit, milk, coffee, any old thing!" Tom saw that Malou was looking worried. "Give us what you have," he said, "and don't fuss."

Malou thanked him. "We have fruit and *croissants* and gooseberry marmalade and, of course, coffee. I hope it will do. And if you will tell me just what you like and how you like it, Mademoiselle Rose and I will see that you have it to-morrow."

"Anything you have will do for us. For pity's sake, don't work any harder than you have to. We'll eat what you eat."

Pataud was waiting for them outside the chicken coop. When he saw Malou he bounded upon her and licked her cheek; but he was very careful not to throw his full weight upon her for he knew that he might knock her over. Then he rubbed his shaggy neck against Tom's knickerbockers.

The sun was high now; it came through the trees in a soft flood of gold; magpies were chattering; cowbells sounded far down the hillside; and a soft breeze stirred in the tree tops. The air smelled of wood smoke and of wet hay.

Tom watched Malou skipping in front of him and he thought that she looked like some picture in a story book. He would have liked to have had a snapshot of her. She seemed so different from American girls. "And she's such a good sport, too!" he murmured to himself. "As far as I can find out she does a man's work and likes it."

Malou stopped dancing and turned round to speak to him. "I'm afraid I must go in now. Mlle Rose needs me to help with breakfast."

"How about a game of tennis afterward?"

"Oh, I'd love it." Malou was smiling. "I'd

just love it. But there is too much to do. I can't leave Mademoiselle Rose alone. And I don't know how to play tennis. It wouldn't be much fun for you to play with me."

"I could teach you," said Tom.

Malou thought a minute. "I'll be through everything by tea time. Perhaps you would like to go for a walk. That would be more interesting for you. I could show you the village of Chexbres. Perhaps you would like to do that."

"You can count on me. What time?" Tom had never thought that he would want to take a walk anywhere; he hated walking. But he was interested in Malou. He wanted to see something of the place where she lived and the kind of things she did.

They started down the winding road about five.

"This is my hill, Tom. In winter when the snow is too deep to walk I coast or ski all the way down to school. I'd rather coast because I don't get so wet on the sled as I do on the skis; I fall so much skiing. I tried all last winter to see if I could get the whole way down without falling, but I never did. The turns are too sharp."

"You ski down this hill!" The thought of it

took away Tom's breath. He had skied in America, but never on such a hill.

"The only hard part," said Malou, "is the stopping and turning."

"I should think the wind would blow you over the edge! And isn't it cold as anything?"

"It is cold, dreadfully cold sometimes. But somehow or other you don't feel it when you're bundled up. Of course, when the wind's very strong or when it's stormy it isn't safe to go out at all. You couldn't see your way through the blowing snow, and your face might freeze."

Tom whistled. "How do you get to school when it's stormy?"

Malou smiled. "I don't. I have to stay indoors and study by myself. There were three weeks last winter when I couldn't get below Ninon's. The road was lost under the drifts. That's Ninon's home." Malou pointed to the turquoise-blue house covered with its vines and roses. "When the storm was over you could not see even the roof. It was three days before her father dug them out. Then he worked his way halfway up to the hotel to join Samuel's path. That's how I was able to get down so far."

"Look," Tom said suddenly; "what is that?" He pointed to an odd-looking wagon winding up the road below them.

"It's a circus wagon," Malou answered. "It used to belong to a big troupe that came every summer. But the circus failed and that's all that is left. It's the monkey wagon. Ninon said she saw it in Chexbres the other day and that the monkeys looked miserable."

The wagon had stopped in front of some houses. A group of children ran out to peer into the cage. And as the circus man began to turn the organ crank, grinding out a dreary kind of tune, all the children joined hands and began to dance around him singing. Malou and Tom stood watching them from the road above. Malou was thinking of the monkeys and wishing that she could set them free. Tom was watching the children and wondering what it was that made them want to sing and dance. "Let's go," he said. "I'd like to hear what they're singing."

They went down close to the wagon, and before they knew what had happened they were in the circle singing and dancing. Tom did not know the words of the songs but it did not take him long to catch them from Malou. The monkeys, accustomed to being danced around in this

manner, looked on gravely; several of them began to dance, too, and to swing by their tails from their trapeze.

"Poor dusty creatures," said Malou when the music stopped. "Do you suppose they get enough to eat? They look so thin."

"I don't think they're overfed. And I bet they wish they were swinging from the limb of some tree instead of from that rusty old trapeze."

"Yes," Malou said. She could not bear to look at the monkeys.

Tom had an idea. "Would you like to have one, Malou, if the man would sell it to me?"

"Oh!" was all that Malou could say, but her eyes were sparkling.

Tom made the bargain. The circus man opened the cage and reached in for a monkey. But the monkey was not easy to catch. All of them were chattering and shrieking and swinging by their tails to the delight of all the children.

Malou whispered to Tom: "Don't let him catch it! One monkey would be so lonely away from his friends. Don't give it to me, Tom. I should hate to have it lonely."

"I want to buy two of them," said Tom to the circus man.

The man muttered something under his breath;

he was having difficulty enough trying to catch one monkey, and he objected to having to catch two. But after ten minutes or more he succeeded, and, squeezing them very tight, he tried to stuff them into a cotton sack.

"Oh, give them to me," said Malou. "Don't put them into that sack. They're so frightened. I can carry them."

The circus man looked doubtful. He really did not like monkeys. He used them only to make a living and could not understand anyone wanting a monkey for pleasure.

"*Poussin*, *Poussin*," whispered Malou to the trembling creatures. "*Poussin*, *Poussin*."

The monkeys liked being called "little chick," so they snuggled into Malou's arm.

"Now," said Tom, "what are you going to do with them?"

Malou thought a minute. "We'll take them back to Ninon. She'll keep them for us until we come home. She'd love to. I know she would, and she'll feed them, too!"

Tom was relieved to know that the monkeys were not going with them on the walk. He felt sure that it would have meant a crowd following.

Ninon laughed at the monkeys. "I'll keep

them for you until you come back from the village, and I'll hide them from Noël. He might squeeze them to death."

Malou gave Ninon a kiss and hurried away with Tom.

"I don't know how to thank you," she said. "I don't understand why you should be so kind."

"I'd like to have some monkeys," he answered, "if I were not so far away from home."

They did not talk much for a little while, just swung down the twisting road. In a quarter of an hour they entered the little village of Chexbres. It was the hour when the sheep and cows and goats come home from the hillside pastures for the night. The village washerwomen had stopped their work at the great stone trough so that the animals might come there to drink. Several men were strolling down the road with vegetable carts, drawn by honest-looking dogs. After them came a bent old woman, almost hidden by the pile of hay that she carried on her head. Here and there small groups were gathering about the doorways to gossip.

"There comes the flock! See! Just there, around the corner of that last house at the end of the street."

Tom looked to where Malou pointed and saw

a crowd of sheep, pigs, goats, and cows winding down the road. They were wandering from side to side and stopping now and then to investigate interesting bits of refuse.

"Those are all the animals of the village," Malou explained. "Different boys take turns driving them to the pastures. Look! Three pigs and a goat are going into that house. They know their own home!"

"Don't they ever get mixed up?" Tom asked, watching the creatures turn into their various houses. "Look, Malou, that noble old goat has found his door locked. He can't get in. What will he do, wait until his owner comes along, or go off with his pals to one of their houses for the night?"

"He'll wait," Malou explained. "Nothing could make him do anything else, except a boy with his stick, or a Pataud."

"Where is Pataud? Why didn't he come with us?"

Malou said that Pataud had to help Samuel round up the pigs. She told Tom how the pigs loved to run down to play with Julie's pigs. "But Pataud will find them and be waiting for us at the top of the road when we get home."

"What will Pataud think of the monkeys?" Tom asked.

"He will like them; Pataud likes everything that looks miserable." Malou told Tom about the kitten that Pataud had found in Cully.

"I'm hungry," said Tom. "Let's get something to eat. Can we?"

Malou led the way to the village store. There was really only one large store in Chexbres. They bought *croissants* and two cakes of chocolate. Then they went to talk to the old street cleaner, who was a friend of Malou's. He always let her sweep a little with his long broom. It was like a witch's broom; five or six children could easily have ridden upon it. Malou showed it to Tom and told him that it was made of hay and was hand-sewn. Tom thought it was very curious and smiled. He was thinking of the New York Street Cleaning Department and wondering why things at home had become so complicated. After this they met one or two of Malou's classmates, went to look at the schoolhouse, and took down several of the lesson books from their dusty shelves. Tom could not help but think how uninteresting those books were, with almost no illustrations, and printed in such fine type!

It was late when they began to climb home, and nearly dark by the time they reached Ninon's. The two monkeys were very sleepy after the heavy meal Ninon had given them; they sighed and lay down comfortably in Malou's apron as if they had traveled there all their lives.

Pataud had found the pigs for Samuel and was waiting, just as Malou had expected, at the top of the road. He sniffed the monkeys, licked them a little, wagged his approval, and trotted on ahead as proud as if he had done the rescuing.

"What are you going to name them?" asked Tom.

Malou thought a minute. "I should like to call them after someone in your country. Tell me a few American names, will you?"

"George Washington and Abraham Lincoln," suggested Tom, and began to tell Malou about them.

"Oh, I'm late," she interrupted. "I'm sorry, but I'll have to run. Will you tell me about the great Americans to-morrow? I want to hear about them but I must help Mademoiselle Rose now. Thank you so much for everything. I've had such a good time. I'll see you in the morning."

"Aren't you going to wait on us to-night at

table?" Tom asked, and waved to her as she hurried up the hill.

Malou turned back and nodded. Then she added, "If you're up early in the morning I'll give you the biggest strawberry you ever saw."

But the Americans left that evening!

Tom's mother decided that she had to have a room with a private bath. It was directly after dinner that they seated themselves in their big car and said good-bye.

Tom looked sad as he shook hands with Malou, but all he said was, "I think your hotel is great. Perhaps sometime I can come back again to see you and George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. Good-bye."

It was an unhappy moment, but Malou managed to smile. "Good-bye," she said. "Thank you for giving me such a good time."

After they had gone Malou wondered whether or not she was going to cry, and she tried hard not to. She spent some time looking at the picture she had painted of Ninon; it was really very good and it cheered Malou. Then she put the monkeys to bed in the kitchen and told Mlle Rose good-night. It was not very long before she fell asleep with her arms around Pataud's neck.

He dreamed that he was sleeping in the open mountain fields and that the dew was falling on the top of his head. If he had not been so sleepy he would have known that it was not dew, but Malou's tears.

CHAPTER VIII

Malou and Ninon Are Lost

GEORGE WASHINGTON and Abraham Lincoln were early risers. When Malou and Mlle Rose came into the kitchen they found the two monkeys seated on the table playing in the sugar bowl.

Only the night before Mlle Rose had filled that bowl with fresh sugar and to have monkeys playing in it was really most upsetting. But

Mlle Rose could not help laughing. The monkeys, white with sugar, were making extremely funny faces trying to lick off the sugar from around the corners of their mouths. When they saw Mlle Rose and Malou they jumped off the table and scuttled into a corner.

"*Poussins*," said Malou. "Little chicks!"

"Little rascals!" said Mlle Rose. She would have liked to spank them, but she did not have the heart. They seemed so little and so thin.

Pataud was disgusted. He had little patience with ill-mannered creatures, but he forgave the monkeys because he was very sure that they did not have Saint Bernard ancestors.

Mlle Rose and Malou agreed that the monkeys should be punished in some way and, after talking it over, they decided to rub their wrinkled noses in the sugar and spank them gently.

The monkeys shrieked while they were being spanked; if Mlle Rose had been killing them they could not have made more noise.

Michel came clumping into the kitchen and wanted to know what all the fuss was about. When he saw the monkeys he was furious. "Haven't we enough mouths to feed around here? Sixteen cats, a dog as big as an elephant, and now monkeys!" Michel muttered and

grumbled all through his breakfast. "I'm tired of all this, tired of everything about the place. It doesn't pay and it never will."

Mlle Rose knew that Malou was hurt. "Take the monkeys and put them out in the barn, dear. Put them in Pataud's old house. Michel will forget if he doesn't see them."

Malou gathered up the monkeys and hurried to the barn. Mlle Rose followed her and suggested a picnic. "Why don't you go and get Ninon to spend the whole day with you in the woods? I'll put up your lunch. You could go up on the Tour de Gourse."

Malou clapped her hands. The woods on the Tour de Gourse were the most beautiful in the canton of Vaud. It was steep enough and high enough to be called a little mountain, but easy enough to climb without becoming tired. Pataud heard the word "picnic"; he saw Malou clap her hands and knew that something pleasant was going to happen. He smiled his best Saint Bernard smile.

Malou hugged him. "We're going for your cart, Pataud, then we're going for Ninon, and then we're going for a picnic!"

Again the magic word! Pataud spun around and barked softly.

Malou helped Mlle Rose make some sandwiches, then she hitched Pataud to his cart, and they started off for Ninon.

Ninon was not sure that she could go. She had promised her father to help spray the vines. "Perhaps Robie will take my place," she said, and hurried off to ask him.

Robie said that he did not mind taking Ninon's place if Malou would let him have a ride in Pataud's cart the next time he wanted it. Malou agreed.

By ten o'clock Ninon had finished all her work and they were able to start up the path through the fields which led to the woods on the Tour de Gourse.

Neither the path through the fields nor the entrance to the woods was clearly marked. Malou and Ninon let Pataud lead the way.

But they had not gone far before they heard someone calling. "Listen," said Malou, "do you hear that?"

The sound was distinct. It was coming from somewhere along the road above Ninon's.

"Sounds like Samuel calling Pataud. Maybe he needs him." Malou asked Pataud what he thought about it.

Pataud listened and looked doubtful. It was

difficult for him to know what to do. There he was with Malou starting off for a day's picnic as her bodyguard, and here was Samuel whistling for him down on the road below. There was no question in his mind which he wanted to do and he persuaded himself that it was not any of his affair how much Samuel might whistle on the road below. Pataud said as much by coming up to Malou and presenting her with his large paw. "My duty is here with you, little mistress," was what he wished to say.

But Malou was not sure why Samuel was calling. "Perhaps," she thought, "the cows have strayed into trouble or the pigs gone down to Julie's." She was holding Pataud's paw. "I think, my friend, you had better go back. Samuel may want something important. I think you had better trot down to see."

"Oh, dear!" said Ninon, "a picnic is not a picnic without Pataud."

Pataud agreed with her. His tail dropped and he rolled his eyes sadly. But he turned away. He licked Malou's hand, trotted off obediently, looked back several times, and then ran down the hill as bravely as if he had not been disappointed.

Samuel had needed Pataud badly. Someone had left open the pasture gate! All the cows had

wandered away! It took Pataud until the late afternoon to find them and to drive them home.

Malou and Ninon went on their picnic without him. It was not so much fun but it was more fun than not going at all. "We had better not go too far," said Ninon. "Papa would not like it if he knew we went far away without Pataud."

"No," said Malou, "we will go only to the field at the top of the hill, just beyond the woods. It isn't very far and it's the most beautiful field in the world. I went there once with Mademoiselle Rose to look for pepper grass for soup."

"Oh, yes! Let's go there!" said Ninon. "If we find any we can take it back to Mama; she loves pepper grass soup."

The children walked slowly through the woods; the winds played with the tree tops; magpies chattered; here and there a thrush whistled; pine cones dropped softly into the carpet of ivy vines; shadows danced with the sunlight falling through the branches.

Malou said very little. She was wishing that she could paint a corner of those woods. She wondered how it should be done, whether she should paint the tree trunks and rocks and branches first, or whether she should begin with the sky and sunlight.

"What makes you so quiet?" Ninon asked. "Are you sad because Pataud isn't here?"

"I'm sad because Pataud isn't here, but that is not what I was thinking about. I was wondering how anyone could paint woods like these. I should not know how to begin. I wish I knew someone who could teach me."

Ninon thought a minute and then she said, "If you could catch the Wanderer he would teach you how to paint. He can teach anyone anything. But the trouble is to find him. He has never been seen since he went into the snow-tops."

Malou did not understand what Ninon was talking about.

"What do you mean? Who is the Wanderer? I never heard of him."

"Didn't you ever hear about Jacob and Anna who lived in a chalet halfway up the Rochers des Naye?"

"I never hear any fairy stories," said Malou. "You are always hearing them. Tell me about Jacob and Anna while I spread the lunch under this big pine."

Ninon told the story while Malou unpacked the picnic basket:

"Jacob and Anna were very young. They lived

happily in their chalet on the mountain side. They had a garden full of flowers and vegetables. They had three goats, two cows, a horse, and a dog. They loved each other dearly. But one day Jacob came to Anna and said, 'I must go away; I must climb up to the tops of the highest mountains. I can't stay here quietly any longer.' Anna begged him not to go, not to leave her alone. But he would not stay; he could not! He had mountain fever. He took a staff and went away. That first time he was gone nearly a week. When he came back he brought his wife strange flowers and shining stones and he told her of the high cliffs where he had found them and how he had had to lean far over the edge to gather the most beautiful ones. Anna was frightened. 'Don't go any more. Please don't go any more. I am afraid here alone. Something might happen to you!' He did not go again for two or three weeks, but then the fever came back so that he could not look at mountains without longing to climb, and in spite of all that Anna said he went away again. Many times he went. Sometimes he would be gone a few days, but often it would be for a week or more. One day when he was leaving Anna put her arms around him and begged him more than ever not to go. 'I cannot stay alone.

I am afraid.' 'I'll bring you some shining stones and perfumed flowers,' he said, and climbed off, leaving her waving to him. And she was crying, too. It was strange, but every step he took he seemed to hear her calling. 'It's nothing but the wind,' he told himself and went on. Over the peaks and down into the valleys he walked. But the feeling grew stronger, and the first thing he knew it forced him to turn back. When he saw his chalet he began to run. He could not get there fast enough. He burst into the kitchen. Anna was not there! Then he ran into their room and saw a terrible thing. There was his wife all white and stiff, lying on the bed with something tiny in her arms. It was a baby! Both of them were dead!"

Malou dropped the marmalade! "Oh, Ninon! They weren't really dead, were they?"

Ninon nodded. "Yes, they were, both of them. It broke Jacob's heart. He knew he should not have gone away. Then he must have lost his wits. Anyway, he climbed into the mountains forever. He's the Wanderer. It's his spirit that teaches people. All day and night he goes about with the shadows and the wind. Sometimes they say you can hear him moan."

Malou was trying to scoop up the marmalade

with a chip of wood. "That's the saddest story you ever told, Ninon. I wish you hadn't told it. Every time I look at the Rochers I'll think of Anna and the baby."

"Papa says he used to have mountain fever badly when he was a boy," said Ninon. "Even now he gets it once in a while when he's tired of taking care of the vines. It comes over him and makes him miserable. It was Papa who told me the story."

"I think I understand," said Malou, and spread some marmalade on a thick slice of bread for Ninon. "Mountain fever must be something like our wanting to come off here to-day, don't you suppose?"

"Oh, it's much worse," said Ninon. "It makes you want to go on and on and on forever. You don't want to do that, do you?"

"I'd like to go way up on the fields beyond the woods. Perhaps we could after lunch."

Ninon was doubtful. She did not think that they should go without Pataud. But Malou persuaded her that it was safe. And when they had finished lunch and buried the papers so as not to spoil the beauty of the woods, they went on until they came to a clearing where the sun shone on a broad field gay with wild flowers.

"Let's see how many different flowers we can find. Let's race," said Malou.

"But we can't count them unless we know their names," answered Ninon, "and neither can we count the ones that we both find."

They hunted on their hands and knees, peered through the long grass to find the small blossoms that nestled close to the ground, pushed aside the leaves of tall weeds to discover special flowers too timid to stand forth in the strong sunlight. They filled their aprons and then came back to the starting place to count.

Ninon emptied her apron. She had red clover, wild rose, and gentian. Malou had these, too, so they did not count them.

But Ninon had a little pink sweet pea called "stop-the-beef," a cluster of purple thyme called "clown orchids," a pink anemone called "cou-cou's bread," and a spray of "mouse's ears."

Malou showed hers. She had baby's breath or "curdles-the-milk," some yellow daisies or "goat's beard," a pink lady's slipper or "dwarf's eye," and a wood geranium or "wolf's mouth." "That's four, isn't it?" Malou asked. "We're even, but yours are better than mine."

"I was lucky," said Ninon. "Wasn't it fun? I'm sorry we have finished. What shall we do now?"

Malou suggested that they climb just a little farther.

Up through the fields they scrambled. They left the eastern side of the Tour de Gourse and wandered on to the opposite slope. They hoped that they might find an edelweiss or "lion's foot," but they did not think they had much chance because the Tour de Gourse was not high enough for edelweiss. They were so interested hunting that neither of them noticed where they were going, or that the western sky was growing dark.

The clouds fell upon them suddenly in a thick gray mist. Peals of thunder rolled up from the valley and echoed against the hillside! Malou took Ninon's hand and they ran for shelter, but it was too late! The rain came in a downpour. The wind lashed their faces and blinded them so that they could not see their way. Suddenly the rain changed to hail. It was terrifying!

"We've lost the picnic basket and all the flowers," said Ninon.

"We've lost our way," answered Malou, "which is worse. I've never been here before. We're on the wrong side of the Gourse."

Ninon's hand trembled in Malou's. "Listen! There are the cannon shots!" said Ninon. "It's Papa shooting at the clouds to scatter them.

Last time it hailed like this it killed all our young vines." Ninon shuddered. "I hate to hear the shooting. It gets all mixed up with the thunder and sounds awful. And I hate to think of Papa out in the storm with his cannon; it is too heavy for him to drag alone."

"Maybe Samuel will go down to help him," suggested Malou.

Ninon was thinking of how frightened her mother was when there were hail storms like this, how she begged her father not to go out to try to save the vines. "My uncle was struck in a storm like this, Malou. He was out with his cannon, shooting at the clouds, trying to break them so that the hail would not fall in such thick sheets. I suppose it was the cannon that attracted the lightning. Mama hates to have Papa go out in storms. But Papa never pays any attention to her."

Malou listened. The crack of thunder and the explosions of the cannon were deafening. "Nothing will happen to your father, Ninon. He has to do what he can to save the vines. Don't be afraid. Nothing will happen. Perhaps Samuel will go to help him."

The lightning and thunder were cracking close to the children now; the rain and the wind were

beating upon them furiously. "See that dark spot over there?" Malou pointed to a pile of stones about fifty feet away. "I think it's a quarry. Let's run. We might be able to keep dry in there."

They clung to each other and ran.

There was an old man sitting in the quarry chipping stones. He was an odd-looking person, something like a big gnome. He was wearing goggles of black wire, to keep the stone splinters from flying into his eyes, and his beard was so long that it tangled in the buttons of his coat.

The children were startled when they saw him. But Malou went up to him and said, "Would you mind if we came in here out of the rain until the storm passes?"

But the old fellow did not even look up. He did not seem to see the children, or know that they were there. He just kept on swinging his hammer. Malou and Ninon looked at each other and crept in under the ledge of rock as far from him as possible. He was not a pleasant-looking companion, but they were sheltered there from the worst of the storm. They sat close together and closed their eyes, so that they could not see the lightning cutting slashes in the black sky. It seemed hours before the thunder stopped

cracking over their heads, and it was quite dark by the time the storm rumbled off into the distant valley.

Then, without a word to the children, the curious old man left his seat and strode down the hill.

"Maybe he's the Wanderer," whispered Ninon.

Malou shook her head. "I don't think so. He's just a deaf old stonecutter. I'm rather glad he's gone." Malou was trying to make out the lights that were beginning to come through the mist about the lake. But not one of them was familiar. "We're lost, Ninon, we're somewhere over on the other side of the Gourse."

Ninon began to cry.

"Don't," said Malou. "We'll have to do something. We can't stay here all night. Goodness knows what might come out of the woods! But don't cry, Ninon. Let's think what shall we do."

"I don't know," sniffled Ninon. "I suppose we should keep on looking for the path, and I suppose we could sleep here until daybreak. Ugh! It's black! I can't even see you, Malou. I think I'd die if I had to stay here."

Malou sprang to her feet. "We won't have to! We won't have to!" She was dancing up and down. "Look! See who has found us!"

It was Pataud! He came bounding upon them!

Even for his Saint Bernard nose it had been difficult to track Malou and Ninon through the woods and fields. The storm had washed away the scent. He had hunted two hours and might have given up had not something in his heart kept thumping, "It's your job. It's your job. You must find them." At last he had succeeded. He was circling round them now, barking wildly, telling them as plainly as he knew how that they must follow him at once.

It did not take long with Pataud leading. They followed him around the shoulder of the hill, directly into the field where they had lost their way. But it was difficult in the black woods. They stumbled and slipped on roots and stumps and stones. Two or three times Pataud had to come back to them, wait until they picked themselves up and caught their breaths, and once he felt that it was necessary to give Malou a lick to encourage her. But after a quarter of an hour they came to Mlle Rose, Ninon's mother, and Samuel waiting at the edge of the woods.

Ninon's mother wept over her daughter. Mlle Rose put her arms about Malou. Samuel held his lantern high and complimented Pataud. Everyone was happy. By the time they reached

Ninon's house and said good-night, they had forgotten how miserable they had been just a short while ago. And when they reached The Six Cats, Malou and Samuel and Mlle Rose were singing.

But Michel was very angry. He had been worried, so worried that he had not taken his afternoon nap nor finished his customary bottle of wine.

"All this sort of thing must stop. This is no kind of life for you, Malou. I've made up my mind to end it. I'm tired of the responsibility. I'm going to sell the place. It's been nothing but a failure since your father died. It never will be anything but a failure. I'm going to sell the hotel, invest the money, and send you away to a boarding school in Lausanne."

Malou tried to speak.

"Go to bed!" Michel commanded. "I don't want a word from you. I will do what I feel is best. There is to be no discussion. I have made up my mind. The hotel and everything about it is to be sold."

Malou and Mlle Rose and Samuel all tried to speak. But he closed the office door in their faces.

CHAPTER IX

Malou Learns the Secret

THE secret!" Malou thought. And her heart ached.

"Oh, Mademoiselle Rose, it's my hotel!" she cried out. "Michel can't take away my hotel. It's my very own. It was Papa's. Michel can't take it away."

Mlle Rose did not answer. She knew that Michel could sell The Six Cats and she knew that

he meant to do so. "Let's go and take off your wet things, Malou," she said softly. "You're shivering with the cold." Mlle Rose knew that Malou never shivered with the cold, even in winter when she came in with the snow frozen fast to her clothing. Malou was shivering because she was hurt. Mlle Rose understood. "Come, Malou," she said again softly, not able to look at her face. "Come, let me help you with those wet clothes."

Malou was not listening. "The Six Cats belonged to Papa. It's mine! It's my very own! Michel can't sell it, can he, Mademoiselle Rose?"

Mlle Rose tried to quiet her. "We'll talk of this when you're warm and dry. Come with me now. There's fresh coffee and some *croissants*. Let's go and have them."

Malou did not stir.

Samuel was standing just in back of her. Malou pulled away from Mlle Rose and turned to Samuel. "Michel can't sell my hotel, can he, Samuel?" She stood up on her tiptoes and caught hold of the old man's rough coat collar. "Michel can't sell my hotel, can he, Samuel?"

Samuel hung his head.

Malou jerked his collar. "Can he? Michel can't take away my Six Cats, can he, Samuel?"

Something was sticking in Samuel's throat.

Malou turned back to Mlle Rose. "Tell me quickly that Michel can't sell!"

Mlle Rose's eyes were full of tears. "Michel is thinking of your future, Malou. He wants to do what is best for you."

Malou dropped on her knees beside Pataud and buried her face in his wet fur. He was her friend. Somehow or other she felt that he might be able to help her.

Samuel said huskily, "Don't worry, Malou. Michel won't be able to sell. There won't be anyone to buy. No one wants a hotel like this."

Malou jumped up. "You mean that he can sell? That he will sell if he finds someone to buy? Is that it?"

Samuel did not answer.

Malou turned to Mlle Rose. "Please! Please tell me!"

"Michel can sell," Mlle Rose answered. "He can sell and use the money for you in any way that he feels is best. He is your guardian. He can sell the hotel if he wishes to."

Malou trembled. It was clear now: Michel meant to take away her hotel, meant to take away everything in the world she loved.

"Don't look like that, Malou! Don't look like

that!" cried Mlle Rose. "Everything will be all right. Don't worry."

The bright color had gone from Malou's face.

Mlle Rose tried to speak calmly. "Listen, Malou! Don't feel so bad. You'll be happy in school. It will be wonderful. You'll meet a great many little girls, have pretty clothes, and see other places."

Strange children, pretty clothes, new places! Malou cared for none of these things. All that she wanted was the hotel which had belonged to her father. The tears were splashing down her white face.

"But, Malou, all the girls will be your friends." Mlle Rose knew that it was useless to say this but she had to say something.

"I don't want any children except Ninon and Robie, Cri-Cri and Noël. And I want my hotel! Don't let Michel sell, Mademoiselle Rose! Don't let him, Samuel!"

"It'll be all right. I know it'll be all right," Mlle Rose kept repeating. It seemed to be all she could say.

Samuel turned his back.

"I want to go to my room," Malou said quietly. "Let me go. I want to be where it's dark."

They watched her walk away. Then Mlle Rose broke down and Samuel began to sniffle.

"What will become of us?" they both murmured.

Pataud, close at Malou's heels, was following her to the room.

It was very dark. Malou could not see even the outline of the wooden bed with its high square pillars and canopy, nor could she see her crazy quilt with its hundred colors, nor the red poppies in her cotton curtains. She felt her way to the window and threw open the shutters. The stars seemed very near. All the storm clouds had disappeared. There was just a faint breeze stirring and the horse-chestnut tree sighed. "Listen, Pataud, it's my tree, my very own! In a little while, when the wind comes, it will sing sadly. Oh, Pataud, what am I going to do? I don't want to live if I have to go away. Listen, Pataud, how quiet it is. Thousands of my things out there in the darkness are broken-hearted. They know they are going to be taken away from me. I can't bear it, Pataud. What am I going to do?"

Pataud snuggled close to her.

She knelt down by the window, forgetting her wet clothes or that there had been a storm. She thought of nothing except the tight feeling in her

throat and the ache in her heart. She listened to the cowbells tinkling near by in the upper pasture. "They're my cows, Pataud, they have come up near us to-night. They know Michel is going to take them away from me. Don't let him, Pataud. They're my cows. They were Papa's. Oh, Pataud!"

The great dog rested his heavy head on her shoulder. His thick, wet fur reminded her that she, too, was wet, so she undressed, put her warm woolen wrapper over her flannel nightdress, and tucked her feet into her black felt slippers. Then going back to the window again, she knelt down. All the familiar lights were sparkling along the edge of the lake. "See them, Pataud, they're mine, too. Papa used to call them his lake jewels. Oh—I don't want to go away!"

Pataud would have liked to understand, but how could he?

Then another thought came to Malou—the worst of all! "You, Pataud; they would take you, too!"

Malou put her hand to her heart. Something was stabbing there. "Oh, Pataud, Pataud," she cried out, running across the room and throwing herself face down on her bed.

Pataud followed and climbed up beside her. He

would have died willingly if he could have stopped her sobbing, but he did not know what to do so he just lay still.

For more than an hour Malou sobbed, and then, exhausted, she fell asleep.

Pataud did not sleep. He was uneasy. Every now and then he heard her catch her breath in her sleep as if she might be going to sob again. Once or twice he felt her shiver. His Saint Bernard instinct told him that it is dangerous for people to shiver when they sleep, and not knowing exactly what he should do, he jumped off the bed, crossed the room, and sprang through the open window to go in search of Mlle Rose.

He found her with Michel, Samuel, and Grandpère. At first he could not make them hear him scratching on the kitchen door. They were talking so loud and so fast that he could not attract their attention.

It was Grandpère who heard him. He laid down his fiddle and said: "The dog's at the door trying to get in. He's been at the door a long time." Grandpère did not like noises that disturbed his fiddling. But he, too, had difficulty in making Mlle Rose and Michel hear him. It was not until he thumped the table with his fiddle bow that Mlle Rose turned around.

She knew immediately that Pataud was trying to tell her something so she followed him to Malou's room.

"It's mine," Malou kept murmuring over and over again in her sleep.

Mlle Rose tiptoed close to the bedside, spread the crazy quilt over Malou, and looked down at her sadly.

Pataud then climbed up on the bed to snuggle down in his usual place. He felt sure that Mlle Rose had done the right thing.

She stroked his head. "Thank you, Pataud, for telling me. I should have thought of this myself." Her felt slippers made no sound as she glided away. "I'll fight Michel until I drop," she thought on her way back to the kitchen.

But Michel was firm. "I'll sell the place and everything on it! Horses, cows, calves, pigs, chickens, pigeons, cats, monkeys!" Michel made a face over the word monkeys.

"But——" Mlle Rose started to say.

Michel stamped his wooden shoes and roared. "There are no buts! I'm going to sell the hotel and send Malou away to school. This is no life for her."

Mlle Rose saw that it was useless to argue. The more she said, the more angry Michel be-

came. She lighted a lantern and went outdoors. Her heart ached and she wanted to be alone in the cool night air. "Something will happen, something must happen to prevent his selling. It isn't fair to take the child away from all the things she loves." Remembering the monkeys, Mlle Rose went to the barn, gathered them up, and carried them to Malou's room. "She will like finding them when she wakes," thought Mlle Rose, and tucked the wrinkled creatures into a market basket.

Pataud did not altogether approve of this, but he made no objection.

Malou woke just as the sun was climbing the eastern slopes of the mountains across the lake. She lay still a minute, listening to the magpies and the cowbells. For that first moment she did not remember, but the sight of Pataud brought it all back. She jumped up and ran to the window. There were her mountains white and dazzling and streaked with long purple shadows, there was her lake dancing and rippling, and there were her pastures. Malou stretched out her arms. "Dear God, it's my very own!" she whispered. "Don't let them take it away. Let me think of something to do that will help."

Both the monkeys had climbed out of their

basket and were crawling across her shoulders. They were delighted to find her hair hanging loose and they began running their tiny fingers through it, chattering with delight. Malou gave them to Pataud to take care of while she dressed.

She did not go into the garden. She could not bear it somehow that morning. She went into the kitchen and made the coffee, heated the milk, cut the bread, spread the red-and-white checked cloth on the table, and arranged the cups and saucers. As she reached up into the high cubby for the sugar bowl she saw Mlle Rose's bread board. It gave her an idea. "It would make a wonderful sign. If I painted it with bright colors and black cats and hung it up halfway down the hill, someone might see it and come to the hotel. If someone did come Michel might change his mind."

Malou took the bread board and ran as fast as she could to Mlle Rose. "I must have it, really I must. It's very important."

Mlle Rose would have given Malou a great deal more than an old bread board that morning.

Malou thanked her and ran to the barn with the board. She set it up on a dusty shelf and hunted about for chalk. "Water colors won't do," she thought. "I haven't any oils, but I can use

chalk." She found her chalk box, picked out stubby bits of red and blue and orange. Then she set to work vigorously. "If the rain smudges it I'll go down and do it over again." She held up the sign and looked at it:

THE SIX CATS WELCOMES YOU!
HERE THEY ARE!
COME TO THEIR HOTEL!

This was done in red, blue, and orange, and underneath was a row of six large black cats.

"Now," said Malou, "I'll take it to Samuel and ask him to help me put it up."

"It will do no good," said Samuel. "Michel is on his way to the village to put up another sign on the post office."

"What does his say?" Malou asked.

"It says:

"FINE HOTEL AND FARM COMPLETE
FOR SALE!
CHEAP!
APPLY FONZALAZ."

Malou looked down at her cats. "We're going to put this up, anyway, Samuel. Hurry! There

is no reason why people should not read my sign as well as Michel's."

"You can't put it up anywhere without special permission," Samuel objected. It gave Samuel the same uncomfortable feeling in his throat that he had had the night before to see Malou standing there with her bread-board sign.

Ninon's father let them hang the sign on his wall. It looked very well against the background of blue vines and brilliant pink roses. Anyone passing by would be sure to see it.

After it was in place Malou and Ninon sat down on the wall. Malou told the sad news. "Everything is to be sold, Ninon, not only the hotel and farm but all the animals, and Pataud!"

Ninon began to cry. "Papa has saved some money for me," she said. "He keeps it behind one of the stones in the fireplace; it's been there for years. I'll ask him if he will let me give it to you."

Malou shook her head. "I couldn't take it, Ninon. And besides I won't need it. Someone will see my sign. Someone will come, and then Michel will change his mind."

"Let's go and gather wild flowers," Ninon suggested, hoping to make Malou forget her troubles.

But Malou shook her head. "I can't, Ninon.

I must go back to help Mademoiselle Rose. We must have the hotel ready in case guests come."

"I'll come help you," said Ninon.

The children walked up the hill hand in hand. "May I see the monkeys?" Ninon asked when they reached the hotel. "And America, I want to see America."

"Afterward," said Malou, "when we have finished cleaning everything."

They found that Mlle Rose had just finished scrubbing the kitchen closet, so they helped her cut fresh pieces of paper to line the shelves. Then they arranged the jars of *confiture* or jam and the boxes and bags in careful rows. This took until midday. Ninon stayed for lunch and helped wash the dishes.

"Now may I see the animals?" she asked. It was not necessary to ask to see the monkeys; they were scampering all over the kitchen.

Malou and Ninon caught them and let them ride on their shoulders. First they went to the stables and paid a call on lazy Escargot, who was snoozing in his large box stall. Then they hunted for the cats, but could find only twelve. The others were off, no doubt hunting field mice. Ninon was fascinated by America. "I never saw

such long legs in my life!" she laughed. "And look at his tail. It's just a wisp."

When everything in the barn had been visited they went down into the pastures. The monkeys still rode on their shoulders, and Pataud bounded at their heels. The afternoon shadows were beginning to lengthen. The snow on the mountains was turning pink. Malou did not feel like playing. She wanted to be still.

Ninon had run ahead. "Pataud's found three more of the cats!" she called back. "I'm introducing them to the monkeys. Come see!"

Malou had a sudden thought: Michel hated the monkeys. He had been furious when he saw them. "Perhaps," she thought, "if I gave them to Ninon it would help."

Malou ran down the hillside. "Ninon," she cried, "I want to give the monkeys to you. I want you to keep them. Michel hates them. He is angry because they are here. I want you to take them away and keep them for your very own."

Ninon clapped her hands. "Oh, Malou! Thanks! But are you sure you want to give them away? Are you sure?"

Malou smiled sadly. She hoped the tears would not come, for she did not want Ninon to see how

bad she felt. "Pataud will take you and the monkeys down to your house in his cart. The monkeys will like the ride and Pataud enjoys the trip. Come, Pataud! Stop ruffling those kittens. Hurry! You may take George Washington and Abraham Lincoln and Ninon home."

Pataud left the kittens and came to Malou, wagging his heavy tail.

It took but a few minutes to hitch him to the cart and to place the monkeys in the seat beside Ninon.

"Good-bye," said Malou, watching them drive away. "Good-bye. Be sure to keep the monkeys warm at night. They shiver terribly when they're cold. Good-bye." The tears had come now, but Malou did not mind, for Ninon was too far away to see.

When the cart was out of sight Malou walked around the hotel onto the terrace. It was just about sunset, and she stood looking down at the lake. Flame color it was, with purple shadows along the shores. "Dear God, I love it so," she whispered. "Please let someone see my sign and come to the hotel."

CHAPTER X

Two Signs Are Read

THE mountains were not white and dazzling the next morning when Malou woke. The skies frowned and a cold wind whipped the lake. The rain fell steadily.

"Everything outdoors is sad, too," Malou thought when she opened her eyes.

The magpies were silent. There were no bells tinkling; Samuel had brought the cows in from

the pasture. There was almost no sound, just the rush and roar of the wind and the beat of the rain.

Malou stroked Pataud and wondered if George Washington and Abraham Lincoln were well covered. She also wondered how much chalk was left on her sign. "We'll have to go down, Pataud, to draw it over again as soon as the rain stops a little." Malou was explaining this to Pataud when she heard the telephone ring.

She sprang out of bed. "It's guests! Someone wants to come! Someone has seen my sign, Pataud! Someone is coming!" She threw her wrapper across her shoulders and ran to the office.

"Allo! Allo! Do you want The Six Cats?" She was shaking with excitement and holding the receivers wrong side out again.

But she heard a thick voice speaking. "I am Herr Polster of Bern. I saw your sign in the post office. I am interested in buying a hotel. I should like to come up to look at the place."

Malou's hands shook. She could hardly hold the receivers. "You mean you want to buy The Six Cats?" she stammered.

"I want to come to look at it," was the answer.

Just then Michel came thumping into the

room. "Who is it? What do they want? Why didn't you wake me? Why doesn't anyone ever wake me?" He took the receivers, pushed Malou away from the 'phone, and began saying, "Allo! Allo! Who are you? What do you want? I am Fonzalaz. Yes! Yes! This is The Six Cats. Yes! Yes! This is the hotel. Yes, it's for sale. Yes! Yes! You may come to see it any time. I shall be glad to show you everything."

Michel talked this way for several minutes. Then he put the receivers back on their pegs and turned to Malou. "What were you telling that gentleman before I came in?"

"I was telling him to come to see the hotel." Malou did not want Michel to see that she was crying. She started to leave the office.

"*Tiens!*" said Michel, and called her back. "You were telling him that, were you?" He reached out his arm and drew Malou toward him. "Don't feel bad, Malou. You don't know how happy you are going to be. You don't know what a fine education will mean to you. You'll make many friends in school and you'll be happy once you are settled there. I have made inquiries. It is a good school. There are fifty other little girls. You will be happy with them."

"Oh, no!" said Malou, her face white and her

eyes wide open with terror. "Oh, Michel, please don't send me away! Please don't sell my hotel! Please!"

The tears were splashing down her face now, but she could not stop them. "Please, Michel. Please!" she begged. "Don't send me away."

He was gentle with her, stroked the top of her head, and said, "I am older than you, Malou. I know what is best. What I must do, I must do. After a little when you have seen more of the world you will know that what I am doing is right. You will thank me all your life. What good is this tumbled-down old place? No guests! No money!"

"Would you sell The Six Cats, Michel, if guests came?" asked Malou.

Michel shrugged his shoulders. He hated to be upset, Michel did. And this scene with Malou was almost too much for him. He ended it. "Go tell Mademoiselle Rose that I want her to make a list of everything in the place. Linen, furniture, carpets, curtains, silver, china, pots and pans, everything! Tell her to hurry. I will need the list to show to the stranger when he comes."

"I will tell her, Michel, and I'll help with the list." Malou ran out of the office.

"From Bern! Ugh!" Mlle Rose made a face.

The canton of Vaud had been subject to the canton of Bern a long time, and Mlle Rose knew much of the suffering in Vaud during that time. "He spoke German, I suppose," said Mlle Rose.

"No," said Malou. "He spoke poor French, talked through his nose." She was not interested. It seemed to make little difference who bought the hotel, since she had to go away.

"The canton of Bern!" Mlle Rose murmured disgustedly. "Ugh!"

"Come, Mademoiselle Rose. Let's make the list," said Malou. She was eager to finish all the hard tasks that made her feel sad.

Malou's courage made Mlle Rose feel ashamed. She stopped murmuring and went into the kitchen, where they started to make the list.

All morning they worked, writing down everything in the closets and on the shelves. Everything! Malou handled each thing gently, especially the coffeepot and the checked tablecloths; they were such intimate friends. But the tears were not to stay long in Malou's eyes.

While she and Mlle Rose were making that unhappy list a man came walking up the zigzag road from Chexbres.

Thickset, of medium height, he was a man about forty with just a tinge of gray in his dark

hair. He wore a knickerbocker suit, high laced boots, a Norfolk coat, and a shabby felt hat. There was something about that hat that made you feel right away the man was an artist. He did not seem to mind the rain and the wind beating in his face, and although the knapsack was unusually large he did not walk as if he felt it to be heavy. Every now and then he would stop, smile at the wet landscape, and puff his pipe.

Coming to Ninon's house, he caught sight of Malou's sign. "Hello!" he exclaimed. "Some child's done that." He went up to examine the drawing. "A clever child, too, someone with talent."

The rain had blurred the cats, giving them the most extraordinary expressions; the tail of one had dropped to the bottom of the sign in a long black streak; the whiskers of another were smudged and dripping.

The man stood looking at them for several minutes, and then he started on up the hill determined to find The Hotel of the Six Cats.

CHAPTER XI

The Artist Comes

MLLE ROSE and Malou were working on the list when the door bell rang.

"It's the stranger from Bern," Malou thought as she straightened her pigtails, smoothed the part in her hair, and told Mlle Rose that she would answer the bell.

"When I open the door I must not let him see that I don't want him to buy. I must do this for

Michel. I must try to be pleasant." She turned to Pataud, who was following her. "You mustn't bark! Understand? We must be polite."

But Pataud had no idea of barking. He was sniffing at the crack under the front door, wagging his tail. If it had been an old friend standing out there Pataud could not have shown more pleasure. When Malou opened the door out he bounded and circled playfully, trying to show his approval.

"For once Pataud is making a mistake," thought Malou. "He doesn't understand that it's the man from Bern who will buy the hotel. But I'm glad he isn't rude. Michel would be angry if he were rude."

But Pataud's instinct was keener than Malou's. He knew that the person standing there on the door step was not one to hurt Malou.

Pataud was right. It was not the man from Bern but the artist who had seen Malou's sign.

"May I come in?" he asked in excellent French, when Malou opened the door. "Is this The Hotel of the Six Cats?" He was smiling and holding his slouch hat in one hand and his pipe in the other.

"Yes, this is The Six Cats," Malou answered. "Are you the stranger from Bern? Are you the

man who wants to buy the hotel? Did you see my cousin's sign in the post office?" But as Malou asked these questions and looked at this man standing there in the rain, smiling at her with such a kind smile, she began to feel something glad in her heart, something that told her he was not the stranger from Bern.

"Oh, no, I am not from Bern. I did not come to buy the hotel. I came to stay here. Have you a room for me? I'm not fussy. I just want to be quiet."

Malou's heart turned a somersault. "Do you really want to stay here?" She tried to take his knapsack and carry it for him.

But he would not let her. "You mustn't touch that, it's all wet and horrid. Besides, it's much too heavy for you. Let me take it. I've carried it so far that I feel lost without it."

"Oh, I knew you'd come. I knew it, I knew it!" Malou was happy; not only had a guest come, but a guest who did not mind there being no private baths. She looked up at him admiringly. What kind gray eyes he had, and what an awfully jolly smile!

"What makes you say that you knew I should come?" he was asking. "I didn't know myself. I didn't have the least idea."

Malou laughed. "I knew it somehow, because I wanted you to come so badly."

They were in the office now. Malou had given him the register to sign and was looking for the key to the balcony room. She was going to tell him why she was so glad that he had come, and how Michel was going to sell the hotel, when Michel himself walked in. "Here is a new guest, Michel," she said. "I am going to give him the balcony room."

Michel rubbed his red nose. "*Tiens!* We will not be keeping guests long. We're selling out."

"Oh, dear, what a pity!" said the artist. "This is a charming old place. I hope you will let me stay. I'm tired of big hotels. Tired of all the noise and confusion. It's so peaceful here. I hope you will keep me."

Michel squinted at him. "Glad to have you until we sell out. Call Mademoiselle Rose, Malou. See that he is made comfortable, but don't let it interfere with that list." With this Michel walked off.

It wasn't necessary to call Mlle Rose. She had come the moment she had finished putting on her good apron. "Monsieur is wet," she said, "and Monsieur would like lunch, would he not?

Take Monsieur upstairs, Malou. I will hurry with lunch; it will not take long."

Malou was intent upon making Pataud offer his paw. "Look, Mademoiselle Rose, Pataud likes him. He is shaking hands."

"What a fine fellow," Malou's new friend was saying. "Is he yours? What's his name?"

"We named him Pataud for his big feet," explained Malou. "Shake hands again, Pataud. Tell Monsieur you are glad he has come."

Pataud did his best.

"What is your name?" Malou asked.

"John Green," he said, writing it in the register.

"This is my hotel, my very own!" Malou exclaimed. She felt very sure that he would understand. And while he stood there holding the pen in one hand and stroking the top of Pataud's head with the other, she told him that the hotel had been in her family for almost a hundred years but that now it belonged to her.

Opening the kitchen door a crack, Mlle Rose called out, "Malou, Monsieur is wet and cold. Don't keep him there talking. Show him to his room."

"Monsieur Green doesn't mind being wet a

bit and he isn't cold," John Green called back laughingly.

Malou picked up the knapsack and led the way. "If you will follow me, I'll show you your room, Monsieur."

Again he explained that she was not to carry the knapsack, that it was too heavy for her, and he took it from her.

"I like to carry bags. I'm used to it," said Malou. "I love to have guests and I want them to be comfortable. I don't mind doing anything for them as long as they are willing to stay."

John Green was looking at Malou's face; he understood that something troubled her. He made up his mind then and there to help her if he possibly could.

"Is your mother here?" he asked.

"Oh, no, Monsieur, she has been dead a long time, ever since I was a baby. But Mademoiselle Rose and Michel and Samuel and Grandpère are here. They live with me." Malou explained who they were.

"And this hotel belongs to you?"

"It is my very own, Monsieur, but it is going to be sold. Michel thinks it will never pay any more and that I should go away to boarding school. There is a man coming any minute to

buy. When you rang the bell I thought you were the man."

Malou opened the door into the balcony room. "This is your room, Monsieur. It has a fine view." Malou ran to open the iron shutters. "See the lake and the mountains. I know you will like them. At sunset the lake turns to flame."

"There's the spark of an artist in the child," thought John Green, and followed Malou onto the balcony. "I've never seen anything more beautiful in all my life!" he exclaimed. "I should like to stay here a long while. It's beautiful, beautiful! I should think hundreds of people would come. I should think a place like this would more than pay!"

"It used to before Papa died," said Malou. "But lately people do not come any more, and if they do they do not stay. Everyone wants private baths. We have none." Malou told him about the Goddards and the Americans, and she told him about Tom and the monkeys.

John Green sat down on the balcony railing. He had forgotten about being wet; he was scratching Pataud behind the ear, puffing on his pipe, looking at the view, and listening intently to Malou. When she had finished about George

Washington and Abraham Lincoln, he said, "You love it here, don't you? You don't want your cousin to sell? You don't want to go to school?"

Malou did not wish him to think that she was a coward. She smiled. "Michel is older than I. He knows more than I do. He says that when I have grown up I'll understand and be glad that I went to school. Michel must be right. But if Papa were here I know he would not sell. I know he would let me keep The Six Cats forever."

"Poor little girl!" John Green thought to himself. "Have you really six cats?" he asked.

"We've sixteen, Monsieur." And she told him how Pataud had found the sixteenth in Cully and how angry Samuel had been when they brought it home.

John Green laughed. "I'd like to paint their portraits," he said. "And I will, too, one of these days, if we can find them all."

Malou gasped. "Do you paint? Are you an artist?"

"I try to be," he answered.

Malou said "Oh!" and looked at him with astonished eyes. If he had been an angel robed in white and crowned with diamonds she would not have been more surprised. "Oh!" she said

again, and sat down at his knees in an attitude of adoration.

"Yes, sir, the first thing I do shall be to paint those sixteen cats. When they are finished and I have feasted my eyes on this view I shall try the lake and the mountains. But I'm afraid they will be too much for me. There is something too magnificent about it to put on canvas."

"I try to paint, too," Malou told him.

"I know you do." John Green was puffing his pipe thoughtfully; occasionally a smoke ring curled into the air. "I saw your chalk cats on the sign. That's why I came here."

"You saw my sign?" Malou's eyes were sparkling with joy. "You mean it was my sign that made you come! You mean——"

John Green blew another puff or two of smoke, then he said quietly, "I mean that I've been lonely for a long, long time, ever since my own little girl went away. She and I used to paint together." He stopped a minute, looking off across the lake. "We used to have good times, she and I. Chalk cats were her favorites; she drew them extremely well. So you see, when I saw yours on the sign I just had to come."

"What was your little girl's name?" Malou asked.

But the artist did not seem to hear her. He was gazing at the far-away mountains across the lake.

"He's sad," thought Malou, "and he must be very cold. His clothes are all wet." She jumped to her feet, called Pataud, and said, "I'm going downstairs now. I want to help Mademoiselle Rose with the lunch. It will be ready as soon as you have changed your clothes."

He stood up, knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and smiled. "Thank you," he said. "I shall not be long. And don't forget that I want to see those sixteen cats and if possible Abraham Lincoln and George Washington."

"Mademoiselle Rose," cried Malou, "he's an artist. He's going to paint a picture of the cats! Then he's going to paint the lake and the mountains. He thinks the view is the most beautiful he has ever seen. He says he wants to stay forever. I don't think Michel will sell now, do you? Why should he want to sell if we have a guest who is going to stay forever?"

Mlle Rose was preparing to cook an omelette; she finished chopping the parsley and put the pan over the fire before she answered Malou. Mlle Rose knew that it would take more than one guest to make the hotel pay. She knew how

"He's going to paint the mountains," cried Malou

many bills were unpaid. She knew that this one guest would not change Michel's mind. But there seemed to be no reason for telling Malou. "Ring the bell, dear," she said. "Lunch will be ready in a quarter of an hour."

"He doesn't understand about the bells. I'll run tell him." Malou scampered out of the kitchen.

After she had explained the bells to Monsieur Green she threw a woolen shawl over her head and ran down into the pasture. She knew where there were some *genêt*, bright yellow ones, with petals like curled fingers. The pasture grass was drenched, the wind came in gusts, but Malou did not mind. She wanted those bright flowers for her new friend's table. She drew the shawl tight about her face and ran as fast as she could. She went down the hill almost to the lower pasture. "He'll love them," she thought. "He'll like the way they feel, all soft and wet and cool. And he'll think they smell sweet. Maybe he'll paint them." She tucked the *genêt* into the pockets of her apron. Her blue calico dress hung limp and caught between her knees when she ran. There were little puddles in her clumsy shoes. "Oh, dear!" she thought, "I'm afraid my apron is ruined." Unfortunately, she had changed to her best orange apron just before coming out. But she did not

worry. She was too eager to arrange the *genêt*, too eager to ring the second bell. She did not even notice that her feet were wet, just scrubbed the mud from them and hurried indoors, arranged the flowers, and rang the bell.

John Green came immediately. He declared that he had never been so hungry in all his life. When he saw Malou standing behind his chair, holding a large bowl of steaming soup, he whistled.

"Bet you spill it," he teased.

"Oh! I hope not," she answered. "But if I did Pataud would lick it up." Pataud had no hope of Malou dropping anything. He knew too well the good care she took of that floor; he had watched her scrub it often and he was very sure that nothing would be allowed to spill, so he went over to lie down under the serving table. But he kept one eye open in case, well—there was always the happy chance that a guest might drop a crumb.

"Malou! You're soaking wet! What upon earth have you been doing?" John Green would have liked to start eating his soup, but the sight of Malou's dripping clothes stopped him. "And your feet! They look like boats."

"Oh! I don't mind. It's nothing. I'm wet like

this a great deal." Malou was passing the bread to him. "Papa used to call me 'Duckfoot' because I was in the puddles so often."

John Green laughed. "But your dress and your pretty apron; they are as wet as if you had tumbled into the lake."

She glanced down at her apron—her best one. "I don't think it is harmed. It'll dry out in the kitchen after lunch. There's something magic about Mademoiselle Rose's stove. Things dry before it in a jiffy. When I was a little girl I used to think there was a witch inside the oven."

"Well," thought John Green to himself, "if she has no idea of catching cold I'll not suggest it to her." Helping himself to celery he asked, "May I have the pleasure of Pataud's company at table? I dislike eating alone and I see you are too busy to sit down with me." He reached under the table with his foot to push the chair opposite away from the table. "May he not sit up there with me, Malou? He's the nicest old fellow I've met in years. To look at him makes me feel good."

It made Malou happy to explain to Pataud that the guest had invited him to lunch, and to help him clamber into the chair.

Pataud, of course, was greatly embarrassed;

he knew that not even his Saint Bernard ancestry gave him the right to sit at that table.

He was careful, too, to keep an eye on the door in case Michel should walk in. But when John Green offered him a crust of bread soaked in wine Pataud gulped it joyously.

Both Malou and John Green burst out laughing. Malou was having such a good time that she forgot to go to the kitchen for the rest of the lunch and John Green forgot his soup.

Pataud became sleepy; sitting up so straight and behaving so politely was too much for him. He rested his heavy head on the table and blinked. Presently he fell asleep and snored a little. He did not wake until lunch was finished, and he might not have waked then if John Green had not roused him by offering a bit of strawberry tart.

Pataud enjoyed the tart.

"It's a pity that it is so stormy," said Malou. "You could have your coffee on the terrace if it were clear. Do you want it here, or do you want it in the other room?"

John Green looked longingly out the window. "What a fine old tree! See how alive it is, how its branches bend and sway, how its leaves quiver! They almost sing a song."

"It does sing. It's singing all the time. I'm glad you noticed it. When you hear all its songs you will understand them. Sometimes they are sad and sometimes they are gay. You can tell what the weather is going to be by the songs of that tree."

John Green took his coffee in the adjoining room before a bundle of burning fagots. He lit his pipe, toasted his feet, and leaned back in his chair. Not for a long time had he felt so much at home. Not for a long time had he been so contented. Perhaps it was being with Malou that took away his loneliness.

She was clearing away the coffee tray. "Would Monsieur like to have me bring a log for the fire? The fagots won't last long."

John Green smiled at her. "Don't worry about me," he said. "I'm quite comfy. When you have finished all this work of yours come talk to me. Come play a game with me."

"Oh, I'd love to!" Malou clapped her hands. "I'll do my work for Mademoiselle Rose, then we'll finish a list that we must make for Michel, and then—then—I can come back to see you!"

"Perhaps Mademoiselle Rose would let you off just this once. What do you think? And this list, whatever it is, don't you think you could

forget about it?" John Green made a funny face at Malou over the top of his pipe.

Malou burst out laughing; there was something so jolly about this new guest. Somehow or other just being with him made her forget her fears about Michel's selling her Six Cats.

"Mademoiselle wanted to let me off," Malou explained. "It isn't that. You see I want to help her. We promised Michel that we should have a list of everything on the place ready for him to show to the man who is coming from Bern. We have it almost finished, that is, everything indoors. We'll hurry just as fast as we can." She finished the end of her sentence as she was running down the corridor with the coffee tray.

While she was gone John Green smoked his pipe and read some old magazines. After a little while he walked up and down in front of the fire to stretch his legs. How peaceful it was, not a sound except the faint rustle of the horse-chestnut tree leaves, and the occasional whistle of one of the lake steamers. Presently his eye fell upon a game of checkers. He tried to think of the French word for checkers and could not; it took ten minutes to remember *jeu de dames*.

"*Jeu de dames*," he pronounced it to himself softly, and remembered exactly how his little

girl had said the word, how much more easily her tongue had rolled around the difficult *jeu*. He sighed, wondering whether there would ever come a time when he would miss her less.

Meanwhile Malou and Mlle Rose were hard at work on the list for Michel.

"I don't believe that Michel will sell now that we have a guest, do you, Mademoiselle Rose? What do you think?"

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, small tablecloths," counted Mlle Rose, trying to avoid Malou's question.

But she insisted upon trying to make Mlle Rose tell her what she thought. "Michel won't want to sell The Six Cats now, will he, Mademoiselle Rose, not while we have Monsieur Green staying with us?"

"One, two, three, four, red-and-white sideboard runners," continued Mlle Rose.

"Tell me! What do you think?"

Mlle Rose smiled sadly. "I think," she said, "that you had better let me finish the rest of the list alone and go to amuse Monsieur Green. Keep him company. He seems to me to be lonely. Perhaps he will stay for a long while if you keep him entertained."

"You haven't answered my question, Made-

moiselle Rose. Tell me what you think." But Malou could not make Mlle Rose speak. Already her pretty head was bent over a drawer of odds and ends. "You're not going to list all those scraps, are you? I'll stay to help you if you are. But they're no good, are they?"

"They certainly will not interest the man from Bern, so I'll not put them on the list. Run along, Malou. Everything indoors is finished. Go have a good time and forget all this."

Malou skipped off, feeling confident, even if Mlle Rose would say nothing, that somehow or other Michel would not sell as long as there was a guest at The Six Cats. It was holiday in her heart.

She and John Green played checkers for more than an hour. Then John Green suggested painting. "I like those yellow flowers that you put on my table for lunch. Don't you think it would be fun to paint a picture of them? I'll go get my oil paints. Have you ever tried working in oils?"

Malou shook her head. "Oh, no, but I've always wanted to, more than anything in the world!"

John Green brought down the interesting box. He opened it and laid all the little tubes on the table. Then he showed Malou some black sticks

in a leather case, something like a cigar case. "This is charcoal, Malou. The first thing that you do when you are going to work with oil paints is to draw a sketch in charcoal of the things that you expect to paint." He made some wide scrawls. "Look, Malou, it would be something like this, for instance, if you wanted to begin to paint *genêt*."

Malou tried. Her scrawls were not bad. And she kept on trying for almost an hour.

Then John Green thought that some of her lines were good enough to keep. He showed her the best, rubbed out the others with a bit of rag, and then they squeezed out the colors onto the palette and tried to mix the exact shade of the *genêt's* canary yellow. At last they were ready to begin to paint.

The fagots had burned down into little white ghosts of the twigs they had been once, and the gray afternoon began to change into evening before either Malou or John Green knew it. They might have gone on painting *genêts* until midnight if the light had not failed and if Michel had not shuffled in to tell them to clear away their rubbish; that the stranger from Bern was coming at any minute to buy the hotel.

CHAPTER XII

The Stranger from Bern

IT WAS late when the stranger from Bern arrived. He must certainly have known that supper was over, but he sat himself down in the dining room as if it was the most natural thing in the world for him to have anything he wished anywhere at any hour. He was a rough man, this man from Bern, and he had an unkind face.

Mlle Rose said nothing, just went about preparing supper.

Michel was all smiles. It did not make any difference to him how late meals were served at The Six Cats. He had nothing to do with the serving. He seemed to enjoy that late supper with the stranger, and between them they emptied many bottles of wine.

Malou waited patiently behind their chairs; she would have stood there all night before asking Michel to take his guest into the other room so that she might clear the table. But it was tiresome, standing there, first on one foot and then on the other.

Several times John Green stuck his head into the room and whispered, "Can't you come now, Malou? Aren't they through their dinner yet? I want you to play checkers with me."

But each time John Green did this Malou put her finger to her lips. After the third time she tiptoed to the door to tell her friend that she had to stay behind their chairs as long as they sat at table in case anything should be wanted.

What Michel kept asking for was wine. Malou went into the cellar again and again. Each time John Green went with her to hold the candle

and reach up on the high dusty shelves for the bottles. The last time, as they were coming up the stairs, he chuckled, "Perhaps when they have finished this bottle they will fall asleep and bump their red noses on the table. Then we can have our game of checkers."

Malou was too tired to laugh; then, too, she had been listening to the conversation between Michel and the stranger from Bern. She knew that there was no chance of Michel changing his mind about selling The Six Cats. She knew that it made no difference to him that there was a wonderful guest in the hotel, one who was paying more than anyone had ever paid for the balcony room and who said he would like to stay forever.

It was nearly midnight before Michel suggested going to bed. "Show Herr Polster to the balcony room, Malou," ordered Michel, just as if he did not know that the balcony room was already occupied.

For a minute Malou wondered if Michel had forgotten and whether she should remind him. But as she looked at Michel's flushed face she knew that she had best say nothing. "I'll ask my friend," she thought, "if he would mind changing. I know he will understand. He understands

everything." Malou dashed out of the dining room to explain the situation to John Green.

Not only did he give up his room and move his own things, but he helped Malou with all that she had to do. Mlle Rose helped, too, of course. But she was so nervous about the whole affair that she kept forgetting things and putting them in the wrong places. "You may as well close the shutters, Malou; the stranger from Bern is not like Monsieur Green and will not care to look at the lights along the lake, nor the stars—— Polster! Bern! Ugh!" Mlle Rose was really very much upset.

Pataud, like Mlle Rose, resented the presence of the man from Bern. He rumbled and grumbled all evening in his most dignified Saint Bernard manner. He was a dog of responsibilities and he considered it his duty to make it clear that this stranger did not meet with his approval. He would have liked to bite the man's leg; several times he sniffed dangerously near Herr Polster's calf and finally had to be locked up in the barn.

"I wish Pataud would nip him," said Mlle Rose. "Good old Pataud! He knows trash when he sees it."

"It's wealthy trash," sneered Michel, "very wealthy trash. And it's going to pay well for The

Six Cats—very well, indeed. I can assure you of that." Michel rubbed his fat hands together and grinned at the angry Mlle Rose.

It was late in the night before they stopped their bickering on the subject of the stranger from Bern and Malou's beloved Six Cats.

When Malou woke early the next morning the rain had stopped and her horse-chestnut tree was singing its merry song. She dressed quickly and hurried out into the garden.

What a morning it was! Nothing stirred except the magpies and the soft wind. The earth was wet; snails with their round white houses on their backs, and slimy limaces without any houses at all, seemed to be trying to dry themselves after the storm. Here and there moisture dripped from the trees and like a soft veil the white mist curled and rose slowly from the lake. Standing there in the warm sunlight Malou poured out a wordless prayer to God—that He might do something to keep the stranger from buying her hotel. When the solemn moment ended she ran to the barn to set Pataud free, and before he had finished leaping and bounding with delight Mlle Rose and Samuel appeared, cowbells began to tinkle, and numerous cats came forth from all sorts of places where they

had hidden to keep dry during the storm; pigeons fluttered about; chickens and roosters began their usual clucking, and presently John Green came down onto the terrace with his palette and brushes.

Michel and Herr Polster did not appear until long afterward. But they did not waste any time on the beauty of the morning. They went straight to business.

"Let's have a look at the old place," said Herr Polster.

"Certainly," answered Michel, and called Malou. "Bring me the complete list. Herr Polster is ready to see the place."

Malou ran for Mlle Rose. "He wants the list of everything! What *shall* we do? We haven't finished it. Michel will be very angry."

Mlle Rose was calm. "Tell Michel," she said, "that only the list of the things in the house is ready, that we have not had time to begin on the farm. Tell him we'll try to have that ready in a day or two. If he is angry, call me."

Malou took the list from Mlle Rose and ran to Michel. "This is the list of the household things," she said. "We have not had time to do everything outdoors yet. We'll have that ready in a day or two."

Michel took the list and glanced over it. "We shall begin indoors, Mein Herr Polster. Everything is listed there. The farm list will be complete in a day or two. There is time enough to see the animals."

But the stranger from Bern preferred to see the stock first. "I'm especially interested in cattle," he said. "Meat is selling high just now. I could get a good price at the market."

Malou clapped her hand over her mouth to stop a scream. Meat! Markets! Her pets! This horrible man was going to buy her animals and sell them to be killed.

Michel, knowing very well how this was making Malou feel, motioned to her not to make a sound. "Samuel was going to kill off several cows this fall, anyway," he whispered in her ear. "Don't let the gentleman see you standing there making faces."

Malou turned and ran away. If she had not she probably would have made a scene. Pataud was taking his morning drink in the trough. Malou ran to him, dropped beside him, and threw her arms around his neck.

Pataud understood. Things were stirring in his heart that made him snuggle close to Malou.

Every now and then he would look off toward the stable and utter a low growl. After a few minutes he stood up, shook himself in a determined way, and started to walk slowly in that direction. Halfway there he looked back at Malou as much as to say, "I am leaving you because I think I should see what is going on."

Malou knew that Pataud was right. She knew that no matter how hard it was she should hear all that the stranger was saying, so she took a long breath, squared her shoulders, and followed Pataud to the stable.

Michel and the stranger were in the cow sheds. "Not bad! Not bad!" the stranger was saying; he was down on his hands and knees examining the mother of America. "Good stock! Good breed! Calves would make fine veal!"

Michel brought out America.

Herr Polster felt the muscles in the calf's hind quarters. "Needs fattening! After a month or so it will be ready to kill."

Malou shivered, and Pataud, understanding that she was hurt, wanted to dash in and put his teeth into the leg of this unpleasant stranger. Malou knew how Pataud felt; she saw the hair on his back bristling and recognized the look in

his eyes. "You mustn't, Pataud, you mustn't," she whispered. "You mustn't do anything like that."

But Pataud continued to glare at Herr Polster. The very sight of him made things inside of Pataud stand on end.

Michel and the stranger moved on to the chicken yard. Malou and Pataud followed at a distance, but near enough to hear what was being said.

"Best broilers in the market they'd make, those young ones!" the stranger exclaimed.

Michel glanced nervously in Malou's direction. "Run find Samuel," he said. "Tell him I want him to round up the pigs. Herr Polster is interested in pigs."

Malou went away sadly. She felt as if the very ground under her feet had dropped suddenly away. She found Samuel and said to him, "Michel wants the pigs brought in. I think they are down at Julie's. Pataud and I will help you. Michel wants them in a hurry."

Pataud headed down the steep path toward Julie's. "Find the pigs" meant "Go to Julie's" in Pataud's mind. Samuel said that he could not go because Mlle Rose had asked him to go to the village for her. So Malou and Pataud went alone.

John Green saw them winding down the path under the terrace where he was painting. He laid down his brush and watched them until they were out of sight. He sat very still, lighted his pipe, and looked down into the mist that he had been trying to paint. Strange, this attachment for a more or less gone-to-pieces old place that he had known such a short time. Curious, the feeling he had about Malou—almost as if he had known her for years. It was a sudden impulse that made John Green call out, "Wait a minute, Malou. I want to go with you. Whoo-hoo! Wait for me!" And laying down his palette, he hurried off the terrace.

Malou heard him and raced back. "Oh, I'm so glad to see you, so very glad!"

He linked her arm through his and they started down the path together in step. "Malou," he said after a moment or two, "I don't know what I shall do after your cousin sells this place. I don't want to leave. I should like to stay a long while."

"And I'd like so much to have you," sighed Malou. "The stranger is going to buy the place and sell my animals for meat. What am I going to do?"

John Green felt Malou trembling. "What

makes you sure that he will? Perhaps he is going to keep them here just as you have always kept them."

Malou shook her head. "I heard them talking. I know."

John Green thought a minute. "And if this man were not to buy what would you do, keep all the animals always? Wouldn't you have to send some of them to the butcher?"

"Yes, once in a while, but never the pets—never the ones that have been here for years. Why, they're like members of the family!"

"I see," said John Green, and puffed hard on his pipe. Then he made a promise. "Malou," he said, "I don't know what I can do, or that I can do anything at all, but I will try to help you."

This cheered Malou. She had great confidence in her new friend.

They had come within sight of Julie's hut. "Why, it's actually hanging to the edge of the hill!" exclaimed John Green. "I don't see why it doesn't tumble over."

"That's what everyone has been wondering for years, but it seems to be as solid as a rock. It's the oldest hut in the neighborhood. It was there when Papa was a little boy. He used to

tell me that whenever he wanted some biscuits he would go down and cut fagots for Julie, and that she paid him with heaping handfuls."

John Green narrowly escaped stepping on a limace. "Mercy!" he exclaimed. "What is the name of that slimy young fellow? I almost squashed him. What's his name?"

"That's a limace," Malou told him. "He's first cousin to a snail. So many of them come out after a rain that it's very hard not to step on them because they're just the color of the paths."

"Is that silvery line behind him his trail?" John Green wanted to know. "Rather pretty, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Malou. "I think it's strange that such an ugly wet creature should make such a pretty silver trail."

John Green stooped to examine it but Malou called his attention to Julie's phlox. A clump of great fluffy powder puffs it was, and the ɑayest kind of rose pink.

"I should like to paint that," said John Green, forgetting the limace's trail. "Do you suppose we could match the shade?"

"Let's try!" exclaimed Malou eagerly. "I'll run back for your paints. It won't take me long." She called Pataud. "You'll round up the pigs,

won't you, Pataud? You'll drive them home to Michel? You see, Monsieur Green and I want to paint." Starting to run up the path, she called back to him, "Just say, 'Pigs, Pataud!' He'll understand. I'll be back in a minute."

"Pigs, Pataud. Your mistress says I must say 'pigs' to you. Do you understand?"

Pataud had known before he left the terrace what his work was to be and he began now in earnest. He dashed into the very wet muddy hole under the corner of Julie's hut and routed out six of the large-eared creatures. He stood looking at them a moment as if he was counting them, then dashed down the hillside. He returned with seven or eight more, just as Malou came back with the paints.

"Good boy, Pataud! Now take them up to Michel," ordered Malou. "And don't let one of them get lost. Not one, Pataud! Michel wants them all in a hurry."

Pataud seemed a little worried. The pigs were scampering about in all directions. He cocked his head on one side and tried to say, "You see, it's a little difficult. I would like to have you come with me."

"You can do it perfectly well, Pataud. Now hurry up! And as soon as you get them home

safely you may come back," said Malou. "We're going to be here painting, aren't we, Monsieur?"

John Green was arranging a place in the stone wall where he and Malou could sit comfortably. "I'd like to spend the day here," he said. "I've seen a great many funny old houses, but I think this is one of the most interesting I have ever seen. We'll be here," he called out to Pataud, who was very busy collecting pigs. "We're sure to be here when you come back."

"Papa used to say that he preferred Julie's hut to all the houses around Chexbres. He said he liked the idea of having a ladder for front-door steps." John Green looked at the ladder and laughed. "I hadn't noticed it before. What a funny idea! If one had nightmares and walked in one's sleep one would tumble off the ladder and wake up in the lake."

Malou was beginning her picture. She was trying to do just as John Green had shown her the afternoon before and was making wide sweeping strokes with charcoal. "Isn't that awful?" She held up a mass of smudgy lines. "Looks as if there had been a fire or a cyclone, doesn't it?"

John Green looked at Malou's charcoal attempt. "Some of the lines are almost right," he said. "They're not bad at all. Now just make

up your mind which one you want to keep, rub out the others, and begin to paint."

"Let's see yours," said Malou.

John Green smiled and held up a blank sheet of paper. "I've been thinking," he said. "Does this hut of Julie's belong to the hotel property? Is it yours, too? Is it going to be sold with the rest?"

"I suppose it's mine," said Malou. "Papa owned it, but I don't know whether Michel is going to sell it or not. If he does I am sure I don't know where poor Julie will live."

Just at this minute the old woman came out the door. She had a huge pile of clothes on her head and started for the trough to begin her washing.

Malou called to her "Whoo-hoo, Julie! This is my new friend. We're painting a picture of your house."

Julie set down the clothes and came over to where Malou and John Green were sitting in the wall. "I'm glad to meet you, Monsieur," she said. "One doesn't see many strangers around here these days. Not many come to the hotel any more."

"I'm sure I can't understand why," said John Green. "Of all the beautiful places that I have

seen in the world, I think this is the most beautiful."

Julie's French was very strange and she had an odd way of swallowing her words. John Green could not understand very much that she said, but he was interested in her wonderful old face.

"Have you any biscuits, Julie? We're terribly hungry," said Malou.

Julie put one of her large fingers against the side of her nose and winked. "Biscuits! I always have biscuits. Come in, won't you?"

Malou and John Green followed her into the hut. Not only did they have biscuits but red wine and strawberries.

Then they went back to their comfortable nook in the stone wall to paint until the bells in the village below announced noonday.

"Oh!" said Malou, "I've left Mademoiselle Rose alone all morning. I haven't done a thing to help with lunch. That hateful man from Bern is there with Michel, too! Oh, Monsieur, I should not have stayed away so long. But I like to be with you so much. You almost made me forget about my hotel."

Lunch was prepared and ready when Malou arrived. Michel and the stranger were just sitting down at the table. Malou rushed into the

kitchen breathless. "Shall I have time to brush my hair and change my apron, or shall I go in to wait on them just as I am?" she gasped.

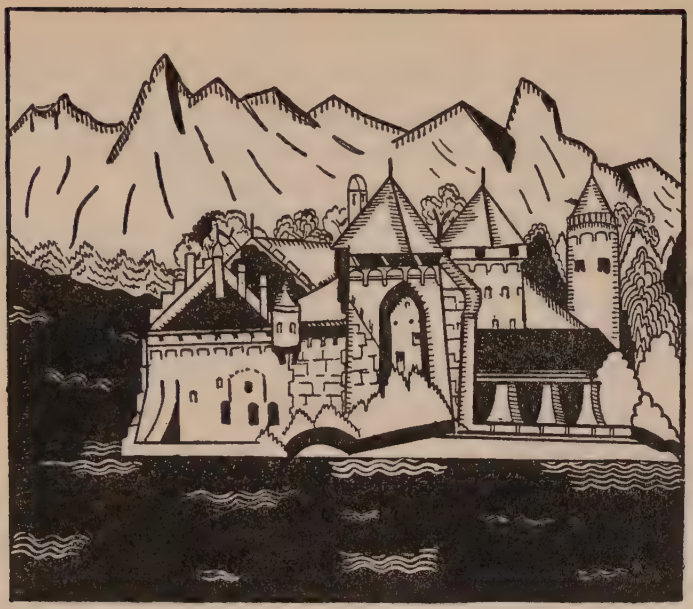
Mlle Rose smiled. "You had better let me serve the soup," she said, "while you go to tidy up a bit. Don't hurry. I don't mind."

Mlle Rose passed the soup. "I'm not prepared to make an offer immediately," she heard the stranger from Bern say. "I will have to think it over. The place seems to me to be very much run down. It will cost a great deal to put it into first-class shape. I'll think it over."

"You have not looked at the household equipment yet," said Michel. "It is excellent. Why not see it this afternoon before you leave?"

Mlle Rose held her breath, waiting for the stranger's answer. When he spoke she almost dropped the soup plates.

He said, "The more I think it over the less inclined I am to buy. I am grateful to you for showing me the place but I am not prepared to make an offer."



CHAPTER XIII

The Picnic at the Pont de Nant

THE stranger from Bern left The Hotel of the Six Cats shortly after lunch. As Malou and Mlle Rose stood together watching him drive away in his motor car they both smiled; but for the joy that they felt there seemed to be no words.

When the car was out of sight Malou sighed contentedly. "I wish my friend would come

back. I want to tell him the good news," she said. "He's so kind! I know how glad he'll be. You see, Mademoiselle Rose, he promised to try to help us. He *is* kind, isn't he?"

Mlle Rose's eyes filled with a wise expression. "He seems to me," she said thoughtfully, "to be the kind of man who comes walking into the pages of story books but very seldom in the broad light of everyday life."

"I know," Malou answered. "I think he's like that, too."

The kind of man who comes walking into the pages of story books did not come back to the hotel for lunch. He had eaten so many of Julie's biscuits and berries that he did not care for anything more. He stayed on the wall, painting Julie's phlox and the fagot pile and the corner of her hillside house until the light began to fade. Then he strolled down the path to watch the sunset from just a little away above the village of Cully. Like a set of toy houses it seemed to him, set close together in the midst of acres and acres of turquoise-blue vineyards. He watched the shadows from the mountains opposite steal across the lake and creep onto the walls and roofs of the toylike village. While he was standing

there two or three stoop-shouldered peasants, with their long pointed baskets strapped to their backs, passed him on their way up the path. John Green chatted with one or two of them and he helped one old man carry an especially heavy load. Whereupon the old fellow half sang and half mumbled a curious tune.

The old fellow's singing was undoubtedly the worst that John Green had ever heard. It really wasn't singing at all, but he was proud of it just the same. He explained how he had led a group of peasant singers in the midsummer fête at Monteret. He described the fêtes, told how all the different classes of people from all the cantons in Switzerland met to sing songs of praise to their country. "Everyone comes," he explained, "vineyard men with their families, peasants, mountaineers, villagers, and townspeople; they come in droves. Even the people who can scarcely walk and the babies in arms."

"The people of Vaud love fêtes, don't they?" asked John Green.

The old man just nodded and mumbled the names of all the different kinds of fêtes in the canton of Vaud. "Fête of the Abbeys, Fête of Singing, Fête of Music, Gymnastics, Sports,

and Fête of the Narcissus." When he had finished this list he began to sing again, and he did not stop until they came to Julie's hut.

John Green said good-bye and left the old fellow sitting on the wall.

Malou met him at the top of the hill. She ran to him with the joyful news. "He's gone, he's gone, the stranger from Bern has gone! He doesn't want to buy the hotel! You won't have to worry about the animals any more!"

"Hurrah!" said John Green, and tossed his hat into the air. It was a great relief because he had not known what he could do to help Malou. They caught hold of hands and spun round joyfully.

Pataud heard the noise and came quickly, eager to join in the fun.

"Let's celebrate," said John Green. "What shall we do? What would you like to do?"

"Oh! Anything! Anything at all! You suggest something!" Malou's eyes were dancing.

John Green fingered his pipe and thought a moment. "A long time ago," he said, "I went to a place called 'Pont de Nant.' I have never forgotten. It was a kind of goat farm directly under the precipices of the Grand Murveran. I think it is the most wonderful picnic spot in all

the world. How would you like to go there?"

"The Grand Murveran! That's my father's mountain. It was his favorite. I've always wanted to go there. But it's more than forty miles from Chexbres, too far to go in a day. But oh! I wish I could! I'd rather go there than anywhere else in the world. You see it was on that mountain that my father——" Malou did not go on.

John Green understood. But he felt that he could not speak to Malou of this. All that he said was: "I shall ask Mademoiselle Rose if she knows of someone who could rent us an automobile. It would not be too far by motor. We could start early in the morning, go as far as Les Plans, and walk up the rest of the way to the Pont de Nant. Do you know anyone whom you would like to ask to go with us? A picnic is not a picnic at the Pont de Nant unless there are more than two. Is there anyone you would like to invite?"

"Yes, indeed!" said Malou eagerly. "I should like to ask Ninon and Robie and Cri-Cri. I should like to take them all if you would like to have them. I wonder if their mother would let them go. Mademoiselle Rose, Mademoiselle Rose!" she called out. "Do you think Ninon's mother would let the children go to the Pont de

Nant with Monsieur Green? Do you think we could get there and back in an automobile in a day? Is there an automobile in Chexbres that Monsieur can hire? May I go? Would you like to go? The Pont de Nant is the most wonderful picnic place in the world! Papa used to say so! And now my friend says so! It's just at the foot of the Murveran! Papa's Murveran! Do you think——"

Mlle Rose clapped her hands over her ears and burst out laughing. "Stop for breath, Malou, and let me think." It had been a long time since she had seen Malou so gay. "Let me see, what shall I answer first?"

While she was thinking John Green suggested that he and Malou go down to Ninon's to ask her mother if the children might go on the picnic.

Mlle Rose had finished thinking. "While you're gone," she said, "I'll telephone to a man in Chexbres who has an automobile. I think he will rent it to you. If he does I don't see why you should not start just after breakfast. You could be in Les Plans by ten."

Malou felt strangely excited, and as Pataud was there looking very much as if he would like to share the fun, Malou told him all about it. "Come on, Monsieur Green, let's ride down to

Ninon's in Pataud's wagon. You'd love to pull us, wouldn't you, old dear?"

Pataud wagged his assent and in less than five minutes Malou and John Green were jogging down the hill in the little red cart.

Fortunately, Ninon's mother and father were at home. They had come in early from the vineyards and were sitting in the front doorway enjoying the cool of the evening. They were glad to see Malou and her guest. They had heard pleasant things about this new guest at The Six Cats. They liked the way he smiled and made himself at home with them. They said that Ninon might go on the picnic, but that Robie and Cri-Cri were too little.

Robie and Cri-Cri were listening from behind the door. When they heard this decision against them they came running out. "Please. Please! Please!! Let us go. Please!!! We'll be most awfully good."

John Green pleaded their cause and won. Ninon's mother and father said that all three of the children might go if Monsieur Green was very sure he wanted them.

Cheers went up!

Then Ninon said, "May we take George Washington and Abraham Lincoln?"

John Green laughed. "I think not," he said, "but I'd like to say good-evening to them now."

Malou ran for her pets. She brought them back in her apron and held up their wizened wrinkled faces close to John Green. "Aren't they beautiful? Aren't they the dearest little things you ever saw?"

Ninon's mother had made the monkeys red flannel coats and knickerbocker trousers. They were certainly most bewitching objects.

John Green could not say honestly that he thought them beautiful. But he shook their paws and said, "How do you do, young fellows? I'm glad to make your acquaintance. But I do not think it would be safe to take you on the picnic. The draught from the motor might give you cold."

"That's true," said Malou. "They suffer so from the cold. The least thing makes them shiver."

Ninon's father had offered John Green some wine, and they sat together for a little while at a tiny table on the pebbled terrace. Robie and Cri-Cri sat down near by and sucked their thumbs. Ninon and Malou whispered on the stone wall and petted the monkeys.

All the stars were shining when John Green

and Malou said good-night and started up the hill.

"I'll watch the clouds at daybreak," Ninon's father called to them. "I'll know as soon as the sun is up what kind of weather we shall have. I'll telephone to you if I think it is going to be stormy."

"It's going to be beautiful; I know," Malou called back. "This afternoon my horse-chestnut tree was singing its merry song. I think it's going to be clear to-morrow."

It was a warm, sunny day. The man with the car came early, and shortly after eight o'clock John Green and his four playfellows were on their way. It would be more exact to say five playfellows, because Pataud occupied a front seat in the automobile.

They whizzed down the zigzag road. Neither Robie nor Cri-Cri had ever been in a motor car before. It seemed to them as if they were flying. They both yelled and leaned out of the car, grabbing at the things they passed.

John Green's heart was in his throat. He tried his best to make the children sit down, but he was unsuccessful. There was something in the speed of that descent down the twisting road that had gone to their heads. They did not

hear anything he said to them. There was only one thing to do and that was make the chauffeur slow down. "After all," he said, "we're not going to a fire; we're going on a picnic." He was mopping the perspiration from his forehead. When he had finished he said to Robie and Cri-Cri, "Now listen, my young friends, the first person who sticks hand or foot or nose or anything else out of this car goes home and does not go on the picnic. Understand? And yelling like wild Indians is forbidden. Absolutely forbidden!"

Robie and Cri-Cri squirmed down into comfortable positions on the floor of the car, wrinkled their faces, and asked at the same time, "What are Indians?"

John Green took a long breath. He was glad to have the children safely on the floor of the car. And he told them about the Red Men in America. He made his story so interesting that Robie and Cri-Cri forgot all about yelling or leaning out of the car. Everyone talked about Indians until they reached Vevey.

Then Robie rose up and said, "I'm thirsty."

"So am I," said John Green. "I haven't talked so much for years. Let's go and have a *glace*. Forbidden or not, cheers went up at this

announcement. Ice cream in the middle of the morning was an unheard-of delight!

They stopped in Vevey at the *quai* or dock with rows of horse-chestnut trees. It was the dock where the lake steamers call on their trips around Lake Geneva. The *pâtisserie*, or cake shop, was just opposite the *quai* on the roof of an old house covered with pink roses. From the quaint roof restaurant they could look over the tops of the horse-chestnut trees along the *quai* to the lake and the mountains opposite.

"It's lovely," said John Green, "but not so lovely as the view from your terrace, Malou. There's something wonderful about being high up and looking down on a lake like this."

Robie and Cri-Cri were not in the least interested in the view. What attracted their eyes was the jolly-looking red-and-white awning over the restaurant. "It's a tent," said Robie. "It is not," said Cri-Cri. They squabbled over this. Robie had not waited for the woman who ran the shop to bring up the *glaces* but had started his pile of biscuits which he had chosen from the counter downstairs, and he wished to settle himself comfortably in the yellow chair and not be disturbed. Cri-Cri wanted the chair, too.

They squabbled over the chair. Robie won. He had almost finished his biscuits and had succeeded in pushing Cri-Cri onto the floor.

Ninon pinched Robie's ear but it had little effect. Robie did not move out of the chair until he had finished all his sugar cookies. Then he suggested going downstairs for more.

Once again, and a little harder, Ninon pinched, but all Robie did was make a face.

John Green was very much amused and said that he thought the woman was a long time in bringing up the *glaces* and that it would be a good idea to eat the biscuits they had, just as Robie had done, and then go downstairs for more.

The cookies disappeared as if by magic. Then the woman came up with a tray of bright-colored saucers and tempting mounds of ice cream. While they were eating the ice cream a steamer stopped at the *quai*. There was much excitement among the people getting on and off the boat. Robie was so interested in watching that he bit several pieces off his paper napkin and swallowed them, thinking they were biscuits.

John Green laughed until his sides ached. It was a jolly beginning for the picnic.

They had to stop in Montreux and Terittet because of a clumsy old ox who took his time

in moving out of the way, and a crawling trolley switching on its crooked track from one side of the road to the other, and a crowd of peasants gossiping in the middle of the road. "I wonder why people in Europe like to stand and talk in the road," John Green thought to himself, but he did not have time to think long about anything.

Robie spied the Castle of Chillon. "What's that?" he asked.

"It's an old castle," said John Green; and then he made the mistake of saying, "It has dungeons."

"I want to see the dungeons," Robie cried out. "Let's go see the dungeons!"

Ninon threatened to give Robie a shake.

But he did not care a fig for Ninon's shakes. He knew very well that she was not angry and that she would not tell his father. Besides, wasn't he on a picnic? And how could one little shake from Ninon spoil a picnic? Also Robie could tell from the twinkle in John Green's eye that he thought he was funny.

"I want to go see the dungeons. I want to go in the castle. Let's go to the dungeons!" Robie insisted, jumping up and down like a jack-in-the-box.

Robie had been right; John Green did think he was funny, and he laughed. Of course there was nothing to do then but stop the car and go into the castle.

Robie did not wait for the door of the car to be opened; he scrambled over the side. Nor did he wait for the tickets to be bought, but went dashing ahead over the drawbridge calling out, "Come on. Let's find the dungeons!"

John Green had been in the castle many times, so he knew exactly where to go. He led the children directly to the stone column where Bonnivard of Geneva had been chained for four years.

"Why was he tied up?" Robie asked, poking his fingers in crevices of the stone pillar. "Why was he chained? Why did he have to stay down here? Was he naughty? Who chained him?"

John Green explained that Bonnivard had taken sides with the Bernese against the Dukes of Savoie, who owned the Castle of Chillon.

"Mademoiselle Rose does not like the Bernese," said Malou. "She says they were very cruel."

"Most people in the olden days were cruel," John Green said. "The Bernese were probably no worse than any others."

"Herr Polster was from Bern," said Malou.

"He was cruel. He would have killed my animals. I'm so glad he didn't buy The Six Cats."

"Why was Bonnivard chained here?" Robie asked again.

"Monsieur Green explained it all once, Robie," said Ninon. "Why don't you listen to what he tells you?"

Robie made a face at her. "Why was Bonnivard chained down here?" he asked again.

John Green was very patient. He explained quietly that the Dukes of Savoie, who owned the castle, did not like Bonnivard because they knew that he was friendly with their enemies.

"Whose enemies? What did they look like?" asked Robie.

John Green gave it up. "Let's go down underneath the castle and see the very old part. It'll take but a moment if we hurry. Come on. Be careful not to stub your toes on the rocks in the floor."

"Why are there rocks in the floor?" asked Robie.

John Green started to explain that the rocks had never been removed, that the castle had been built directly upon them.

But Ninon stopped him. "Don't bother with Robie, Monsieur. Don't pay any attention to

him. The more you tell him, the more questions he will ask."

But John Green liked Robie and continued to explain how the original walls of the castle had been built right on to the rocks.

Robie, however, paid no attention. He was peering down into a kind of chute. He was poking his head through the iron bars at the top of the chute and trying to see down into the black space below. "What's down there?" he asked. "Where does it go?"

"Robie!" exclaimed Ninon. "You're spoiling everything. We'll never get to the Pont de Nant! We'll never have any lunch! Never have any picnic!"

"What's down at the bottom of that hole?" asked Robie, just as if Ninon had not spoken.

"Oh!" said Ninon disgustedly. "Come on! Let's not wait for him!"

But Malou was interested, too. She was peering into the chute and thought that she could see water at the bottom, and she listened carefully while John Green explained that in olden days the owners of the castle threw the bodies of their prisoners down the chute, and that sometimes they used it as a secret exit when enemies were attacking the castle.

"Were they dead when they threw them into the chute?" asked Robie.

"I'll tell you all about it when we get back into the car." John Green explained that they really must hurry.

"I want to go down underneath everything to see the old part," said Robie. "Maybe there're prisoners there. I'd like to see them."

"We'll go down there next time, Robie," said John Green.

Ninon grabbed Robie by the arm and hurried him along.

When they were on their way again Malou told the story of the pelican that had been painted on the wall of the banquet hall in the castle.

"What's a pelican?" Cri-Cri asked.

"Didn't you see it, Cri-Cri?" Malou asked. "Didn't you see that great white bird with her bill sticking into her breast and drops of blood dripping down from the wound?"

Cri-Cri shook her head.

"Papa told me about it," Malou explained. "He said that that picture on the wall in the castle was true to life, that when the pelican mother has no food for her babies and knows that they will die, she tears out her own heart and feeds it to them."

"What for?" asked Robie.

Ninon pinched his ear.

"Let's paint a pelican some day, a fat one with plenty to eat, and five or six jolly young pelicans," said John Green.

Malou was delighted. "We'll do it to-morrow. We'll race to see who can paint the fatter bird."

They were whirling through a lovely village clustered around a square with a huge tree. It was as large as Malou's horse-chestnut tree but not so beautiful. All the country people for miles around had come to the village. It was market day. The square was crowded. One corner was gay with flowers and plants, another with laces and all kinds of hand-woven materials. And still another was cluttered with every imaginable kind of tinware, and another with china. Here and there a wrinkled old woman peddled a goose, or a chicken, or a duck in a basket, letting the creature's head poke from under the cover as if it wished to say, "I haven't long to live but while I do I wish to see everything there is to see." There were men with goats and cows and donkeys, and of course there was the *glace* man. At one end of the square was a tiny Punch and Judy show and a carousel, or merry-go-round. Crowds of children in gay colored aprons gathered

around the carousel and listened to its squeaky tune as if it were magic music. The picnickers had to go slowly through the village on account of the crowd.

"I want to ride on that gold pig in the carousel," said Robie.

"Perhaps on the way home," said John Green. "If we stop again we shall never get to the Pont de Nant."

"But the pig won't be here," said Robie. "I want to ride on that pig."

Fortunately, by this time the automobile had wound its way through the crowd and was on the open road again.

CHAPTER XIV

Papa Jacques

MARLETAZ'S chalet at Les Plans was a very old house. For centuries it had been the starting place for mountain climbers and for children on their way to picnics at the Pont de Nant. There was a large place in the long grass just in front of the chalet completely worn down by the children who sprawled there on

their way up the long hill, and there was a path from this worn spot to the trough in back of the chalet where there was a spring with water as cold as ice. Four long benches stood under the trees and bore endless scars from penknives. It was a welcome resting place for tired feet that had tramped all the way up from the shore of the lake and that had still farther to go to the picnic grounds. It was cool there and there was always a breeze in the valley, always the sound of water rushing over the rocky ledge in the brook that raced down from the mountains.

John Green and his playmates were piling out of the car when a troop of schoolboys arrived on foot. They were flushed and dusty. They were noisy, too, and clumped about, hitting everything in sight with their long walking sticks, and playing pranks on one another. Their teacher was with them. He was an elderly man with a long gray beard and bright, laughing blue eyes. It was very plain that he loved the boys. John Green chatted with him a moment or two and the old teacher said that he missed the boys so much during vacation that he took them on picnics once a week. John Green admired his courage; the one picnic that he had undertaken was not half over and he was already exhausted.

"How do you make them behave?" he asked the old teacher.

"I don't," was the reply. "But when they become too noisy, I just give one long blast on my whistle and they come running to me like frightened goats. Look," he said, and raised his arm, waved it once or twice in the air, and blew his whistle.

Instantly the boys gathered around him.

He waved his arm again in a mystic circle. It was a well-known sign. The whole troop burst into song. First came "Le Roi Dagobert"; they seemed to love the song about the absent-minded old king of the Franks. Then came "Cadet Rousselle"; all the boys knew about poor Cadet Rousselle and his three houses without roofs. After nine verses the old teacher waved his arm again in another mystic signal. The troop turned and started to climb. They disappeared through the field and over the rustic bridge across the brook, singing as they went, "*Tremp, ton pain, Marie*," "Sop your bread, Marie."

Ninon did not like to have them go ahead. She said, "They'll get to the Pont de Nant before we do, won't they?"

"I hope they won't eat up all the lunch at the Pont de Nant," said Robie.

John Green laughed. "They have their lunches in their knapsacks just as we have." He held up a huge knapsack that he had kept discreetly hidden until that moment because he had been wise enough to know that if he had shown it before it probably would have been opened and most of the things in it devoured on the way over.

Cheers went up at the sight of the knapsack.

"Can we have something to eat now?" asked Cri-Cri. "I'm hungry."

"No, Madame, you cannot eat now. You must climb up that long hill first. Hungry or not, you do not get so much as a sniff of this lunch until you are seated on some jolly old rock under a pine tree at the Pont de Nant."

"Just one little peek! Please!" teased Robie. "Just one little peek!"

"No!" answered John Green, and burst out laughing.

"When do we get there?" asked Robie, very much disappointed because he could not stick his small nose into that tempting knapsack.

"Never," answered John Green, "unless we start at once. Come along. All of you. We ought to be ashamed to think that those boys walked

all the way up to here from the lake while we rode up comfortably in an automobile. Come along! Stir your lazy bones!"

Malou and Ninon and Pataud ran ahead along the path. Robie took one more look at the knapsack, helped John Green put it over his shoulders, pulled Cri-Cri by the hand, and followed silently.

"No loitering behind," said John Green. "We're going to march like soldiers. Not a stop, not a question, understand?"

There was no reply to this command, just a cloud of dust from under Robie's square toes as he puffed on.

The first thing they passed along the route was a gray-haired donkey with saddle baskets thrown across his back and hanging down both sides. The baskets were made of straw and filled with provisions and clothing for the people who lived at the Pont de Nant.

"That's the only way they have of getting things up there," John Green explained.

"Do you think he would give me a ride?" asked Robie, and started to run after the man who was walking along beside the donkey.

John Green made Robie come back. "Don't you think, you young scalawag, that the poor

donkey is carrying enough as it is without your climbing on his back?"

"But it's so hot! Whoo!" was all that Robie said. He took off his coat and tied it around his waist.

It was hot, very hot. The path was winding now under the brow of the hill and there was no breeze; the sun was so strong that it seemed to scorch. John Green followed Robie's example and tied his coat around his waist.

"Is it far to the Pont de Nant?" asked Cri-Cri. She was rolling down her stockings and twisting her curls into a knot to keep them off her neck. Her small round face was as red as a berry, and she looked as if any minute she might burst into tears.

John Green was a little frightened and decided that it would be best to carry Cri-Cri a little way on his shoulder. So he switched the knapsack to one shoulder and lifted Cri-Cri on the other and trudged along.

"Will you take me after a little while?" asked Robie. "I'm awful hot and my legs ache."

"If you're too hot, young fellow, you don't have to go any farther. You can just sit down here and wait for us to come back. We'll bring you what's left of the lunch."

Robie said nothing more but walked on faster.

"I wouldn't miss this for anything in the world," called Malou. She was at least a hundred yards ahead and Ninon was close behind her.

"Neither would I," said Ninon. "If I had to crawl all the way on my hands and knees and melted into a grease spot on the path I'd do my best to get there."

Fortunately, they came very soon to a beautiful place where the path crossed a stream some two or three hundred feet below them. They stood on the little bridge and looked down into the cool mists. It felt so good on their hot faces; the air was filled with the scent of drenched pines which were drooping over the edge of the stream.

"I want to go swimming," said Robie.

"Me, too!" said Cri-Cri.

John Green explained that if anyone tried to swim down there in that rushing water he would be swept away.

"Couldn't we wade in that blue pool?" asked Robie.

"That blue pool, Robie, is probably fifty feet deep. If you stepped into it you would go plop out of sight!"

Robie said, "Oh!"

The blue pool which Robie wanted to wade in was large enough for a baby elephant to sit in comfortably; it had been made by the constant swish and swirl of the water, especially during the melting seasons. John Green explained how the thawing snows of April and May swelled the stream and made the water rise as high as the bridge.

"It's very dangerous to go into the mountains in spring," said Malou sadly. "It's very dangerous to go until the shooting stones have stopped falling with the melting snow. It's dangerous to be caught on the passes when these stones are falling. They're big stones sometimes, big as rocks, and sharp and horrible!" Malou was thinking of her father.

John Green understood. He took her hand and tucked it away into his pocket. "There is something very beautiful about the mountains, I think, Malou. One feels close to God. They're so high, so clean, so sparkling, so far above the world!"

"I know," Malou answered. "That's what Papa used to say."

They had left the bridge and were climbing steadily now. The air was beginning to feel cool.

There was a sparkle in it. The sunlight seemed to dance ever so lightly on the tree tops. Different kinds of flowers began to appear along the roadside. Ninon spied a bluebell with a drop of dew in the center.

"Don't pick it, Ninon," said Malou. "The fairies have put a jewel there."

"Pooh!" exclaimed Robie, catching up to them very much out of breath and very red in the face. "There aren't any such things as fairies."

"There are, too!" Ninon answered. "The mountains are full of fairies, especially the high ones that are always white."

"Pooh!" said Robie again. "Girls make me sick; they haven't any sense, have they, Monsieur Green?"

John Green chuckled and said that he was not at all sure but what there might be many strange and beautiful things way up on the mountains in the snow, about which no one knew anything.

"Shall I tell him about the Wanderer?" Malou asked.

Ninon nodded. And all the rest of the way she and Malou told the story of Jacob and Anna.

They came out suddenly from the wooded

path to a broad rocky field studded with brilliant flowers. Rising abruptly on the north and the east were the peaks of the Javernaz, the Diablerets, the Petit, and the Grand Murveran. Like white giants they towered over the sunny valley, their rugged heights piercing the blue sky and tempting the white clouds to come and blow about them.

Malou stood still and gazed. Never had she been so close to mountains like these. She felt as if she were standing in the presence of mighty kings. She squeezed John Green's fingers and whispered, "Which is the Grand Murveran?"

"There," he answered, "the high one to the right, just over those purple ledges."

Malou was silent a minute. Then she said, "It must be like heaven up there where everything is so white and sparkling."

"It is," John Green answered. "I climbed the Murveran once, a long time ago, and I shall never forget how beautiful it was, a kind of different world of sunlight and clouds and snow and wind—only clean things, nothing else."

Ninon and Robie and Cri-Cri had run into the field. Ninon was down on her hands and knees picking wild flowers. Robie and Cri-Cri had

started to climb upon a rock. John Green called to them, "Come on; it's just a step now to the Pont de Nant, and that means lunch."

They came suddenly upon the chalet. It was just around the corner, nestling behind a mass of rocks and wind-blown pine trees. Such a tiny chalet it was, half the size of Ninon's house, with only one or two small huts close by. Crowds of goats were wandering about, and pigs, great clumsy white pigs with long pink ears!

Robie and Cri-Cri were fascinated. "It's a zoo, it's a zoo!" cried Robie, and started after a friendly looking goat. "It's a circus, that's what it is," said Cri-Cri.

The schoolboys were everywhere. Their voices filled the valley with whoops and calls. Most of them had taken off their shoes and stockings and were scampering over the rocky ground as if their feet were made of rubber. Leaping and tumbling in the grass, dashing after goats, climbing the rocks and splashing into the stream, and singing—always singing—they made the Pont de Nant hum.

Robie and Cri-Cri did not wait for permission to take off their shoes and stockings, but joined the boys who were playing in the water.

"We'll open the knapsack and spread out the

lunch here on one of these benches," said John Green. "You girls arrange the things while I go into the chalet to get some milk and cheese."

There were any number of benches similar to the ones that had been at Marletaz's chalet, and there were tables, too, seven or eight of them under a clump of pine trees. Numerous goats were lying under the tables to keep cool. They were ill-mannered creatures and kept pushing and shoving each other for better places. Ninon and Malou had to poke several of them in order to get near enough the table to spread out the lunch. Pataud was beside himself with joy. He was making friends with the goats and looking at the pigs with a disgusted air, as much as to say, "I know all about you; you'd run away to Julie's hut if it were not so far."

In a few minutes John Green came back from the chalet with a steaming dish in one hand and a large pitcher of milk in the other.

Robie and Cri-Cri must have been watching for him out of the corners of their eyes, for they came scampering at the sight of these tempting dishes.

"Goat's milk and toasted cheese!" John Green announced. "Let's begin quickly before the cheese gets hard."

Robie and Cri-Cri had begun already. They had not waited to see if anyone had brought forks, but were plunging their fingers into the bowl of roasted cheese. Other goats, besides the one already under the table, were collecting and watching the picnic curiously, hoping no doubt for some of the scraps.

"Goats are certainly sociable creatures," said John Green, nudging a large black one with his elbow; the creature had attempted to climb into his lap.

"Look at Pataud," said Malou.

Pataud had found a lame goat and was trying to help it to the chalet. The goat seemed to know that it had a skillful escort, for it was allowing Pataud to shove it gently from the rear.

"Poor goat," said Malou, "it has a broken leg."

John Green did not think so. "It's probably bruised. These mountain goats, you know, have a way of leaping too far sometimes and tumbling into a crevice in the rocks. They are very apt to do this on a beautiful day like to-day; strong sunlight affects them like wine, makes them do all sorts of silly things which they would never think of doing in the rain."

John Green and Malou went to examine the

injured leg. Robie and Cri-Cri went back to the stream to wade, and the goats made the most of their opportunity, put their front hoofs up on the table, and ate what was left of the lunch. There wasn't very much, except paper, but the goats enjoyed this immensely.

Ninon just rescued the knapsack in time; an elderly goat had begun to nibble at it.

The goat's leg was not broken but just bruised, as John Green had thought. "How can we keep it from going off again and hurting itself more?" asked Malou.

John Green pointed to a little wooden fence which formed a pen in front of the chalet. "See that yard, Malou? It's there for just such an emergency as this. We can put the goat in there."

John Green and Malou and Pataud managed to push the goat through the little rickety gate into the inclosure. It was full of young goats and young pigs. The injured animal did not like being herded with these, and hobbled about, butting over one or two of them.

"Where is everyone?" asked Malou. "I haven't seen anyone except the schoolboys since we came. Doesn't anyone live here?"

"The shepherd boys are off on the pastures in the hills," said John Green. "There's just

one old woman here. She's over there in the creamery."

"Where's the creamery?"

John Green pointed to a squatty hut at one corner of the pen. "There! That's where they make cheese and butter. The old woman makes almost all of it herself. She's really very remarkable. She must be a hundred years old."

They went to look at the old woman. "A hundred and fifty," whispered Malou; "she has more wrinkles than Julie."

"She may be funny to look at but I bet she is as strong as a horse. She's probably taken root here like an old tree and has lived all her life no doubt on goat's milk and *garzin*."

"What's *garzin?* A sort of tonic, isn't it?"

John Green explained that it was a mountain liqueur made from the gentian root. "It tastes like ammonia and makes your hair frizzle."

Malou laughed. "It hasn't made her hair frizzle; it's as straight as a cow's tail. But she's an old dear and I think I'll go in and talk to her."

Malou and the old woman chatted for half an hour, or rather the old woman chatted and Malou listened. The first chance she had she asked if she might see inside the chalet.

The old woman was pleased and took Malou indoors. It was certainly a curious house. There were no floors, just mud tramped down hard until it seemed almost like stone, and there was not much furniture—just one long table and two long benches. There was only one room. It had a large open fireplace at one end and an old-fashioned stove at the other. But, of course, for the goats and the cows and the pigs there was an adjoining compartment separated from the main room by a board partition that reached only halfway to the ceiling. At the far end of this winter dwelling for the animals was a balcony that formed the second floor of the house. One climbed this balcony by a ladder. Malou was curious to know what was up there, so she climbed up to see. She found huge piles of straw lying in a row under the eaves. These were the beds. The rafters overhead were completely covered with dried animal skins, vegetables, and cows' horns. "I wonder why on earth they sleep up here with all these things hanging over their heads," thought Malou, but she did not like to ask for fear of seeming rude.

The old woman had not stopped talking for one single moment, and all the while she talked she knitted. It was difficult for Malou to dis-

cover which worked the faster, the woman's jaws or her fingers.

While Malou was in the chalet talking with the old woman, Ninon, Robie, Cri-Cri, and John Green played with the young animals. Ninon was pretending that her small goat was a doll. Robie and Cri-Cri were amusing themselves by playing a game of tag with a frisky young pig. John Green sat against the fence, hugged his knees, smoked his pipe, and laughed at them.

Presently the shepherd boys began to come down from the pastures with the cows. The cowbells were all of different tone and sounded like soft music as the animals came filing through the rocky gateways at the bottom of the pastures. It was milking time. The old woman and the boys became very busy and hustled about with their pails from cow to cow and goat to goat. Grabbing the animals by their hind legs, the boys would squat down just where the cow or the goat happened to be and proceed with the milking. Sometimes it was necessary to hold onto the animal by its tail, but usually talking pleasantly or singing a little was all that was necessary.

John Green promised the children that they might stay until all the cows and all the goats

were milked and driven back to the slopes for the night. Pataud helped drive the animals, and Malou watched with her arms around the neck of the lame goat. The poor creature wanted very much to follow his friends and disliked spending the night in the pen.

The sunlight fell in long slanting shafts now; it played on the sides of the mountains and set the snows on fire. All the shadows turned violet and gradually the high peaks disappeared behind blowing veils of gray clouds.

John Green and his playmates wound their way down through the cool deepening twilight. The stars came out and the wind forgot to blow.

Malou walked beside John Green. Halfway down the hill she whispered, "I don't want to call you 'Monsieur' any longer. I want to call you 'Papa Jacques.'"

CHAPTER XV

Up the Rochers des Naye

THERE was no more Monsieur Green in Malou's life nor in the life of anyone at The Six Cats; "Papa Jacques" had come to take Monsieur John Green's place. Malou had asked Grandpère and Michel to call him Papa Jacques; she had asked even Mlle Rose and Samuel. "He is Papa Jacques to me and he will have to be

Papa Jacques to all of you because we are all the same." But Mlle Rose and Samuel thought that it would not be proper, so they decided to call him Monsieur Jacques, which would sound less formal than Monsieur Green. And so it was that Monsieur Green ceased to exist at The Six Cats; a very much at home, very dear friend took his place.

Malou spent the morning after the picnic cleaning house. Wrapped in an old rubber apron that had belonged once upon a time to Samuel, she attacked the dining-room floor. She scrubbed it thoroughly, rubbed it dry, and then waxed it. After she had spread the wax on the floor with a knife she polished it by wrapping both her feet in soft woolen rags and sliding back and forth as if she were skating. This was hard work but fun in a way, rather like playing a game. When she had finished, the old floor almost glistened. Then she scrubbed the front steps, the kitchen floor, and the long strip of oilcloth in the second-floor hall. The only part of all this that she found difficult was keeping Pataud outdoors. She explained to him several times that it was something in which he could not have a part, but Pataud insisted upon standing at the front door and looking in pitifully, as much as

to say, "There isn't the slightest reason why I cannot come in and do that with you."

When the scrubbing was finished Malou helped Mlle Rose with the lunch. They made delicious pancakes, rolled them, and filled them with grape jelly because they had heard Papa Jacques say at breakfast that he loved *crêpe*. *Crêpe* was Grandpère's favorite dish, too, and upon being invited by Papa Jacques, the old man laid down his fiddle and came to sit at the table with Malou's new friend. Together they finished the three high piles of pancakes that Malou set between them.

After lunch Grandpère went back to his fiddling and Papa Jacques went onto the terrace to paint. When Malou had brought him his coffee and helped Mlle Rose with the dishes, she took her mending and went out and sat beside him. In a little while Mlle Rose came, too. Every now and then Malou's eyes would wander from the stocking or the tablecloth that she was darning to the canvas in front of Papa Jacques.

"The blue of this lake is an impossible color to find," he said. "My blue is too blue, my green is too green, and every mixture I try is too heavy. Come help me, Malou; I believe you know the color better than I."

But Malou shook her head. "If I leave this sock, Papa Jacques, and start to play with you, I'll never finish the mending. There!" She turned her back to him. "I won't even look at you or anything that you're doing until this is finished." She held up her basketful of odds and ends.

Papa Jacques winked at Mlle Rose.

Mlle Rose tiptoed up behind Malou and took the basket from her hands. "I'll finish the mending, Malou. Go help Monsieur Jacques. He is having a hard time with that blue." Mlle Rose was holding the basket out of Malou's reach.

Malou looked at her with grave, wide-open eyes. "You do all the work these days. I'm as lazy as Escargot."

"If you are as lazy as Samuel's old four-footed snail I'd hate to think how lazy I must be, Malou." John Green waved his paint brush. "If I had to make a sign and hang it around your neck to tell people what kind of girl you were I'd paint, 'The Least Lazy Little Lady on Earth.' That's what I think of you. Now come along, help me with this blue; I need you dreadfully."

Malou ran to him and they painted together

until the lake was no longer blue but flame color. Then they had tea on the terrace and watched the different shades of lavender play across the summits of the mountains.

"It's going to be a fine day to-morrow," said Malou. "Listen! Do you hear the way my tree is singing?"

Such a soft song it was! It drifted away on the light breeze and mingled with the sound of the cowbells far down in the pastures.

"I wish I were going on another picnic at the Pont de Nant. I like to see the Murveran close by," said Malou.

Papa Jacques took a long puff of smoke and fingered his pipe affectionately. "How would you like to climb the Rochers des Naye? The Murveran seems to be just across the street from the summit of the Rochers on a clear day."

Malou jumped up eagerly. "I'd rather do it than anything in the world. Oh, Papa Jacques! What makes you think of such things!"

Mlle Rose was delighted, too. Her sweet round face was all smiles, and she promised another picnic lunch. Pataud, not knowing in the least what it was all about, made it clear by the way he wagged himself that whatever it was he wished to be included.

Papa Jacques and Malou spent the evening planning their climb.

Again Malou's horse-chestnut tree predicted the weather correctly. The next morning was even more beautiful than the morning of the picnic. Malou and Papa Jacques and Pataud left The Six Cats at seven o'clock. Samuel drove them to the railroad station in Chexbres, where they took the train to Montreux, then the little mountain tram up to Caux, and from there they began to climb.

The trail wound up gradually for a long way. It was not in the least difficult. Suddenly it became just a narrow path winding through a broad field completely white with narcissus. Malou had seen narcissus before but she had never seen them as they were here. It was like fairyland. The air was heavy with the fragrance of their blossoms. From where Malou and Papa Jacques were standing the flowers seemed to sweep past them in a broad white stream.

"Papa used to call the narcissus, 'little white lady,'" said Malou. "He would never pick one because he said that every time anyone picked a narcissus, a little white lady somewhere in the world shed tears. The stems of the narcissus are full of tears, Papa. Did you know that?

When you pull them they seem to weep. Have you ever noticed it?"

"I never have," he answered. "And somehow I do not think I should care to pull one now."

Malou liked him for feeling this way.

They had crossed the field of blowing white flowers and come to a place along the path from where they could see the summit of the Murveran rising sharp and rugged against the blue sky above a shoulder of the Rochers des Naye. "There's your mountain, Malou. There's the Murveran holding up its head like a great prince."

Malou stood on tiptoe as she looked at it, feeling as if she would like to fly across the valley. "Papa's mountain," she murmured, her eyes shining like stars. "Papa's Grand Murveran!"

John Green understood perfectly all that Malou was feeling. But he did not say anything, just stood quietly beside her. In a moment or two he suggested that they begin climbing again. They went up the steep path in silence. After a little while they came to a hut by the side of the path. It was a curious building with no windows at all but with one large door that was standing wide open.

Malou looked in. "Come see, Papa Jacques! Such a funny hut with nothing in it at all except straw and mud and some old blankets."

"It's a shelter hut," he explained. "Sometimes the shepherds have to bring their cows and goats here when the storms come up suddenly and it is not safe to take the animals home."

"We could stay, too, if a storm came, couldn't we? Wouldn't it be fun?" Malou looked at the blue cloudless sky and sighed. "No storms to-day, Papa Jacques. We will have to come back some other day when there are clouds and mists and lots of wind."

Papa Jacques looked at the blue sky. "You cannot tell on a mountain. Storms come suddenly from nowhere. But I hope we do not have one to-day." He examined the shelter hut. "I do not think it would be so much fun as you imagine to stay here in a storm, Malou. It's jolly enough when the sun is shining, but it would be cold and draughty in a storm, and I am afraid we should find it a little crowded if a herd of goats or cows happened to arrive."

Malou laughed. "I should not mind how many goats and cows came; I should love it."

Pataud had gone on ahead, but he came bounding back in a great state of excitement.

Apparently he had found something that disturbed him.

Following him, they discovered that the trail disappeared suddenly under a snowdrift two or three hundred feet wide, choking the gorge from as far up as they could see down to where they were standing. Pataud was trying to say, "This is a serious matter. How can we find the trail when it is hidden under five or six feet of snow?"

"It's a *névé*," said Papa Jacques. "We shall have to cross it. The trail leads on undoubtedly from somewhere on the other side."

Malou was excited. "I've never been on a *névé* in all my life! I've never even seen one close by! Papa used to tell me about them and he used to say that he would bring me to cross one some day. Isn't it wonderful?"

Papa Jacques looked over the field of snow. "Usually," he said, "you have to have an ice ax or *piolet* when you cross snow like this on a mountain. You take the *piolet* and chop little holes in front of you to step into so that you won't slip." He tried crossing a corner of the *névé*. "Fortunately," he said, "the snow is not frozen. If we are careful I believe we can cross without *piolets*."

Pataud bounded ahead fearlessly.

"Come back here, Pataud!" Papa Jacques commanded. "Haven't you enough Saint Bernard blood to know that you should cross a sheet of snow like this carefully? Come here at once! Stay close to us."

Pataud seemed a little ashamed and came back.

"How do we go?" Malou asked.

Papa Jacques examined the *névé* again. He felt sure that the trail continued from the other side, but of course he could not be positive. "If the Rochers des Naye were higher and the snow actually frozen, this would be a glacier and we could not think of crossing without *piolets*." He rumpled a little of the snow with his foot. "It's safe enough, I think, because we can dig our boots into it."

"What about Pataud?" asked Malou. "He hasn't any boots."

"I think Pataud can take care of himself. But to be on the safe side I will put a cord on him. I should hate to have him slide down there."

Malou and Papa Jacques stood looking down the *névé* into the yawning gulf below. The villages of Caux and Territet and Montreux, the lake, and the mountains of Savoie on the opposite shore seemed like another world. A thin blue

mist hung over them, and here and there the sun washed some meadow or sheltered corner of the lake with burnished gold.

"If Pataud slipped or if either you or I slipped on this *névé* we'd never stop until we bumped into the hotel at Caux. It makes me just a little dizzy to look down there." Malou turned her back and gazed up at the ridges above her. "Look, Papa Jacques, there are ten million diamonds in the snow. It's the most beautiful thing I ever saw. It makes me think of a story that Ninon told me about the 'Daughters of the Frost.' Shall I tell it to you?"

Papa Jacques looked at his watch. "I should love to hear it," he said, "and I think we have time. We can sit here and rest a little before we cross the snow field."

They settled themselves comfortably on a patch of soft moss and leaned against a smooth rock shaped like an armchair. Pataud sighed and stretched himself at their feet. Malou began her story:

"Terrible dragons named 'Foudres' live here, Papa Jacques. They sleep all winter and never make a sound, but when the summer comes they wake up and come out at night and go roaring across the mountains. They are black dragons.

Their eyes are filled with fire, and their mouths make great deep ugly sounds. Night after night when the sun has been hot on the slopes all day the dragons come out and rage. They are so fierce that the stars are afraid and hide themselves. Everything grows dark. The shepherds fall on their knees and pray. All the animals run to shelter. The Foudres are so awful! They roar and make hurricanes. They flash their eyes and set fire to the trees. They step on the rocks and knock them down into the valley. They snatch at the clouds and rip them open so that great floods wash down the sides of the mountains in deep gullies.

"Every summer the shepherds live in terror. They cannot tell what minute the dragons will come. But in the fall two beautiful little white ladies called 'Daughters of the Frost' come to drive away the Foudres. They are white and they sparkle, these lovely little ladies. Icicles hang from the ends of their hair, and they wear snowflakes for their dresses. No one else can chain the dragons. So of course no one can feel safe from them until the Daughters of the Frost come. Sometimes it seems as if they were not coming, as if they had forgotten the angry dragons and were going to let them roar and rumble

and frighten the shepherds all winter! But the beautiful little white ladies never fail. It is easy to know when they are coming because the trees and all the foliage put on dresses the color of flame. When the dragons see the bright dresses they creep away and hide. They know, wicked old dragons that they are, that the Daughters of the Frost are on their way."

"I hope," said Papa Jacques, looking nervously at the mountain side, "that the Foudres will not choose this evening to stroll forth."

"I should not mind. I should not be afraid," said Malou, and she told him about the time that she and Ninon had been caught in the thunderstorm on the Tour de Gourse.

Then they talked about Jacob and poor little Anna and the baby, and looked across at the different slopes of the Rochers trying to picture just where the little chalet might have stood.

"I do not need to find the Wanderer to have him teach me to paint, do I, Papa Jacques, now that I have you?"

Pataud was bored by all this. He decided to cross the *névé*.

"Come here, you rascal! If you slip it will be the end of you. Look at him, Malou. He thinks he is a chamois."

Pataud was crestfallen, but he came back obediently.

"For a Saint Bernard, Pataud, you seem to me to be too playful on snow passes. I doubt if you could rescue a frozen traveler." Papa Jacques took a piece of cord from his pocket and tied it to Pataud's collar.

"If Pataud knew that he had to rescue someone he would behave differently," said Malou in defense of her friend. "He knows this is a lark and he is just amusing himself. He thinks it's fun to romp about on the *névés*, don't you, Pataud?"

Pataud was ashamed of being tied with a rope; he hung his head and moped.

"I wonder if you're right," said Papa Jacques. "I wonder what Pataud would do if we were in trouble."

Malou's eyes sparkled. "Let's pretend that we are and see what he does."

But they did not have to pretend.

Suddenly, without the least warning, great angry clouds swirled up from the other side of the Rochers. Black and menacing, they came with a roar and rush of wind! In an instant the whole mountain side disappeared beneath them. It grew dark and it was impossible to see more

than a few feet ahead. The wind was blowing hard and there was a choking fog.

Papa Jacques caught Malou by the arm. "Don't move! Don't take a step!" he commanded. "In fog and wind like this you might easily lose your footing and fall over the edge of the path. Hold fast to me!"

"The Foudres!" whispered Malou, and she had scarcely spoken before a great flash of lightning cut the thick clouds surrounding them.

"We'll make for the hut," said Papa Jacques. But a roar of thunder drowned his voice.

Pataud was frantic. He was straining at the end of the cord and barking wildly.

"Quiet, Pataud! Quiet!" Papa Jacques commanded. The wind tore at them savagely. It was bitterly cold. "Hold fast to me, Malou. Step just where I step. We'll make our way back to the hut." With Pataud straining at the cord and pulling him forward, and Malou clinging to his hand, following close behind him, Papa Jacques had to walk sideways. Cautiously and slowly they made their way down in this manner for several hundred yards. Each minute the clouds were becoming thicker. Then the rain came.

"It's only a little way to the hut; it will take but a minute."

But Malou could not hear Papa Jacques. All she could hear was rain, wind, and thunder.

They crept on down for five or six minutes, but they did not come to the hut.

At a certain spot Pataud became almost unmanageable. He tugged viciously at the cord and snarled.

"Something is wrong and he knows it," said Malou. "Perhaps we have missed the path. Let Pataud loose, Papa Jacques. If we have made a wrong turn, Pataud will know."

Papa Jacques did not hear what Malou said but he felt her tugging at his coat and turned around.

"The hut," gasped Malou, for the wind and fog were choking her. "The path! We've missed it! Let Pataud——"

Papa Jacques freed Pataud.

He whirled around, darted back up the path, and disappeared in the fog.

"The path! Pataud knows!" Malou tried to explain.

Papa Jacques was doubtful. "There are some rocks here, Malou. Sit under them and catch your breath. I'll climb down a way to see if I can find the hut. Don't stir until I come back for you! Don't stir!"

Malou crawled into the shelter of the rocks as best she could. It was better than staying in the open path where the wind and fog were blowing in such gusts.

Papa Jacques went down a short distance but he found no hut. He went back to Malou and discovered that Pataud had returned and was sitting beside her, panting but confident.

"Pataud found the hut," said Malou. "I know he did. If we let him I think he can take us there."

"There is nothing else to do," said Papa Jacques. "I'm sure I have not the least idea where it is and I cannot understand how we could have missed it."

Malou climbed out from the rocks and spoke to Pataud. "You must take us to the hut! Quickly, Pataud! You must take us to the hut!"

The dog's hair was bristling. Every nerve in his huge body was tense. He barked, circled around his mistress and caught hold of the hem of her skirt to lead the way.

In less than three minutes he brought them to the hut.

They had made a wrong turn. The path which they had climbed lay to the left; they had taken

a right fork. All the time they had been quite close to the hut, but there had been no way of knowing because of the dense fog. It was just where the paths branched that Pataud had become unmanageable. He had known they were making a mistake.

The storm raged for only an hour, and the hut, although the wind sifted and whistled in through the cracks, made an excellent shelter. But no three creatures could possibly have been wetter than they were. The rain water oozed from them.

"Well!" said Papa Jacques, as he settled Malou in the straw and wrapped a blanket around her, "you have your wish. We're in the hut and the Foudres are playing about outside. All we need now is a herd of cows and goats."

"What we need now more than anything else is something to eat, isn't it, Pataud?"

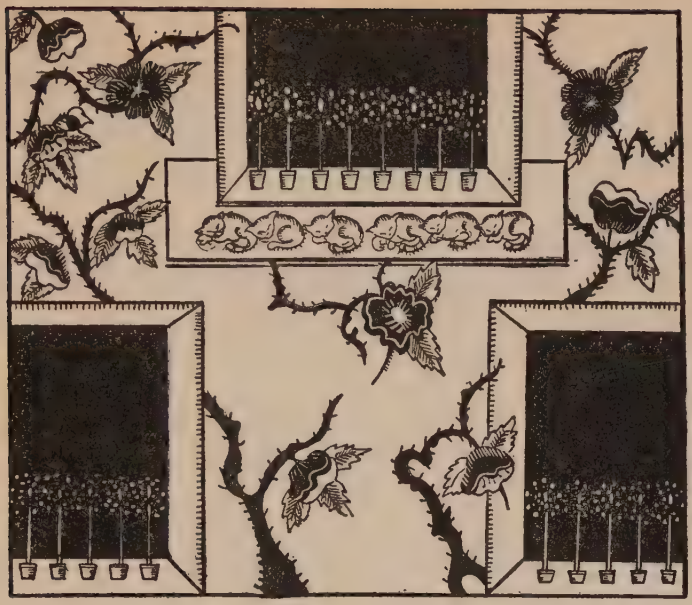
Pataud agreed with his mistress.

"You stay still, Malou!" said Papa Jacques. "Rest yourself. I'll prepare lunch. I hope it is not ruined."

But Malou insisted upon helping. And while the storm swept up and down the mountain side and finally rumbled away, they untied Mlle

Rose's neat little packages and feasted on slightly moist biscuits, toasted cheese, and sandwiches.

Pataud amused himself sniffling the corners of the hut, trying, no doubt, to discover just what kind of animals had taken shelter there before him. He was not in the least proud of what he had done. He considered it part of his life's work to see that no harm came to Malou.



CHAPTER XVI

Bad News and Good News

THE storm passed as quickly as it had come. The sun broke through the clouds with a flash of gold and set the dripping mountain side to sparkling.

Papa Jacques and Malou stood at the door of the shelter hut and sniffed the air. It smelled of drenched pines and wet earth. Pataud sniffed, too, but what he smelled was the interesting odor

of cows and goats. No doubt he was wondering if it was his duty to go off and make sure that all the herd on the mountain side were safe after the storm.

Malou guessed what he was thinking. "No, Pataud, you're going home with us; you've had enough excitement for one day."

Pataud wagged his tail, but he continued to sniff.

"I'll gather up the remains of the lunch things and we'll start at once," said Papa Jacques.

But he found that Malou had already done this. All the odds and ends and bits of paper were packed neatly in the knapsack. Papa Jacques smiled. "Malou," he said, "there was a man in my company during the war who was exactly like you. We called him 'Happy Hooligan.' He couldn't stop working to save his life. The harder he worked, the happier he seemed to be. Once when we were in a little town not far from Lille, orders came suddenly to withdraw. This hard-working double of yours happened to have been detailed to pile up seven haystacks. He was just finishing the seventh when the command came. Instead of running to pack instantly, he stayed on to complete the work. Just as he was finishing he rammed his

pitchfork into something soft. It was a spy. Happy Hooligan hauled him out and ran him into headquarters at the end of his pitchfork. Several days later he was made a sergeant."

Malou laughed. She tried to say "Hooligan" and could not. "I like to work, Papa Jacques. I like to get things finished."

"So that you can start other things. I know." Papa Jacques was having difficulty with his pipe; all his tobacco was wet. "I know you, Malou; you're just like Happy Hooligan, and some of these days you're going to have luck as a reward for all your hard work. People cannot work the way you do without accomplishing things." Papa Jacques winked at her over his pipe. "But just at present the first thing to accomplish is the descent of this mountain. If we had a canoe we could glide down the path. There's water enough. But as we haven't a canoe I suppose we'll have to splash down. Come along. Here goes!" He led the way by stepping into a puddle halfway to his knees.

Pataud followed, and then came Malou.

The path had become a brook. The mud was five or six inches deep. Any number of loose stones were rolling about, making it difficult not to turn one's ankle on the sharp down grade.

But neither Malou nor Papa Jacques had much trouble. They really did not mind it at all. It was a wonderful lark. The mountain side was so beautiful.

They came to the narcissus field and Malou said, "Look, Papa Jacques, they're holding up their heads just as if there had been no storm. They're brave, aren't they, as well as beautiful?"

Papa Jacques had found a cluster of pink blossoms hiding among the narcissus. "What are these, Malou?"

"That's *pied de chat!* Don't pull it! It's bad luck to pull *pied de chat!*"

But Papa Jacques had pulled it and was sticking it into his buttonhole. "We'll translate it and call it 'cat's foot,'" he laughed. "There's nothing unlucky about pink cat's foot."

But Malou looked grave. "You should not have pulled it, Papa Jacques; we shall hear bad news now. Whoever picks *pied de chat* hears bad news before the flower withers."

"Nonsense," said John Green. He leaned over and pulled a yellow daisy. "Here's a 'goat's beard.' Whoever pulls *barbe de bouc* will hear good news before another sunset."

The rest of the descent was easy, and they were lucky to make good connections with the tram

from Caux and the train from Montreux. Mlle Rose was waiting for them on the doorstep of The Six Cats. She was very much excited and very worried.

Malou could tell this from a distance and called out to her, "Don't worry, Mademoiselle Rose! we're safe and sound! The storm didn't hurt us a bit. We're just wet and muddy, that's all!" But once in Mlle Rose's arms, Malou knew that something besides the storm had frightened her. Mlle Rose's heart was beating loud and fast as if there were little hammers there. Malou could feel it. "What's the matter? What is it? You're not ill, are you? Has anything happened?" Malou searched her face. Tears and sad, frightened eyes were what Malou found. "Tell me, Mademoiselle Rose! Tell me quickly what has happened!"

Mlle Rose looked pitifully at Papa Jacques, as if she hoped in some way that he could make what she had to say easier to tell.

Curiously enough Papa Jacques was taking the *pied de chat* from his buttonhole as Mlle Rose started to speak. The cat's foot blossom was quite withered.

"It's the stranger from Bern," said Mlle Rose. "He came again this morning just after

you had gone. He has been here all day. This afternoon he made a definite offer for the place. It was a good offer, far more than Michel had hoped. Michel will sell immediately. He is with the stranger now in the dining room." Mlle Rose covered her face with her apron and began to sob.

Malou turned to her friend. "Oh, Papa Jacques, don't let Michel sell! Please, Papa Jacques, don't let him sell! Think! Think quickly! Isn't there something we can do?" Malou felt Pataud's soft warm tongue licking her fingers. "They will take Pataud, too, Papa Jacques. Oh, please, please, think of something to do! Don't let them take Pataud!"

Papa Jacques was unstrapping the dripping knapsack from his shoulders. "Let's go indoors, put on dry things, and think it over," was what he said. His voice was calm, his smile reassuring, but exciting things were stirring within him. He had a wonderful idea. All that he needed was to think it over a little. This, of course, might be dangerous because at any minute Michel might sell The Six Cats to the stranger from Bern. And then it would be too late for this idea. There was no time to lose. Papa Jacques gave Malou another reassuring smile.

Malou tried her best to be comforting. "Don't feel bad, Mademoiselle Rose. Don't cry. Our friend Papa Jacques will do something. He won't let Michel sell. I know he won't."

Mlle Rose looked up sadly. "How do you know, Malou? How can you tell that anything will stop Michel selling to this man from Bern? They are in there now together, this very minute. How can you feel that Michel won't sell?"

"I know," said Malou staunchly. "I have a feeling here." She put her hand to her heart. "Something here makes me hope."

But just then the dining-room doors opened and Michel came out followed by the stranger from Bern. "I think your offer a favorable one, Mein Herr Polster," Malou heard, "I'll accept it if we can come to terms about Julie's hut."

The hope died in Malou's heart, and turning away quickly she ran into the garden.

Papa Jacques had gone to his room where from the balcony he had watched Malou. Like a flower with a broken stem she seemed to him standing there in the garden, trying to hold up her head. Pataud was with her and Papa Jacques watched them together. Malou seemed to be telling him something, and occasionally Papa Jacques thought he heard sobbing. He was thinking hard,

so hard that he forgot to puff his pipe; it hung cold from his lips and he bit it savagely.

Malou did not know that Papa Jacques was watching her as she stood there very straight, almost like a brave man condemned to die before a firing squad. She shut her eyes and scarcely moved a muscle in her body, just whispered to Pataud who was close by, "Michel's going to sell, after all, Pataud. He's going to send you and me away and we're not to go to the same place either. We may never see each other again. We'll have to say good-bye, but not only to each other but to everything else at The Six Cats. Come along. We may as well begin now."

Papa Jacques had not heard what Malou had said to Pataud; it had been only a whisper and the wind stirring in the horse-chestnut tree had carried it away. But Papa Jacques guessed.

"I'll go follow her," he said to himself. "I won't let her see me but I want to see her. I don't want to lose sight of her for one minute."

Very quickly he left the balcony, ran downstairs and into the yard. By being careful to keep well in the shadows he followed Malou and Pataud without either of them knowing that he was within hearing.

Malou went to the stable first, where she

The garden of The Six Cats

opened Escargot's stall to steal in beside the old horse. "Escargot, lazy old snail, you're going to belong to someone else now, someone who will make you work awfully hard. But I'll think of you all the time and say my prayers for you that you won't have to work too hard. I will, Escargot, I promise." She patted the old horse and went away, Pataud following solemnly.

Papa Jacques watched her as she went to the cow barn, and he tiptoed near enough to hear her speak.

Standing beside the calf, Malou was saying, "You made our wishes come true, long-legged America. It was you who brought me my friend Tom. I'll never forget you even if they do make you into meat. Never! I promise!"

These farewells were almost more than Papa Jacques could bear. But he watched Malou and kept on thinking, thinking as hard as he could.

She went to the pigs next. Strangely enough, they were all in their pen. Not one had escaped to Julie's. Malou leaned her elbows on the old wooden bar of the pen. "Good-bye," she said. "If you run away any more, run to Lausanne. Come to see me. I shall be there in a strange school."

"The pigs will go to Lausanne," thought Papa Jacques. "But they will go as sausage and bacon; that is certain. No more running down to Julie's for them." He followed Malou across the yard to the barn. "She's going to find the pigeons and chickens," he thought. "They'll go to Lausanne, too, as squabs and broilers."

Malou did not stay long with the pigeons and the chickens, and Papa Jacques could not hear what she had to say to them. But he saw her when she came from their houses. She was crying. Papa Jacques was afraid that she would see him or that Pataud might scent him, so he crept in back of the pump where he hid beside the tiger lilies. He was near enough, however, to hear, "It's all right, God. I guess if you want Michel to sell, it's best that he should sell. It's all right, God. I understand."

Papa Jacques was not sure whether it was this that decided him or not. Anyway he made up his mind, and it did not take him long to steal by Malou and go indoors.

He found Michel in the dining room rowing with Mlle Rose. It was a heated, noisy argument. Mlle Rose was flushed, and Michel's face was covered with fine purplish lines. They were talk-

ing at the same time and shaking their fists at each other. It was a minute or two before either of them noticed that Papa Jacques had come into the room.

"If you please!" he began, "I have something important to say! Michel!" he called out, raising his voice as loud as he could. "I would like to speak with you."

Michel paid not the least attention.

Papa Jacques crossed the room to face him so that there was no chance of not being seen. "I want to speak to you of something very important! Very important, Michel!!"

Michel was fuming. Of all the arguments he had had with Mlle Rose, this was the worst. Michel pushed Papa Jacques aside and flew at his opponent again. He fairly shrieked at her, "I tell you, if Herr Polster wants me to include Julie's hut with the rest of the junk around this place, I'm going to do it. Nothing you nor anyone else can say will stop me! I'm tired of being bossed by women and children. I know what I'm doing. Herr Polster is paying a big price for this scrap heap. What difference does an old hut make? It's nothing but a pile of boards, anyway. What possible difference can it make? If Herr

Polster wants Julie's hut included he shall have it!" Michel was stamping up and down the room, roaring and sputtering.

Mlle Rose was less noisy but not less angry. "I tell you, Michel," and she shook her finger in his face, "that this *Bernois* shall not get Julie's hut unless he gets it over my dead body. Right is right, and I mean to see to it that Julie is given a square deal. She is too old to defend herself. It would kill her if her hut were taken away. Where could she live? What could she do? I tell you it would kill her! Kill her!!"

"It's time she died, anyway," roared Michel. He had worked himself into a tantrum.

Papa Jacques stepped in front of him again and caught him by the arm. "Listen to me!" he commanded. "I want to talk business with you. Business, do you hear me? Be still a minute! Listen to what I have to say!"

Michel tried to pull away, but Papa Jacques held him fast. "Listen, my friend," he said, "stop making all this absurd fuss. I want to talk business with you."

Michel must have heard the word "business." He listened.

Papa Jacques spoke quietly. "How much has Herr Polster offered you for Malou's Six Cats?"

"Fifteen thousand francs!" said Michel. "Why? What business is it of yours?"

"Only that I will offer you twenty thousand francs for the hotel without Julie's hut," replied Papa Jacques.

"*Tiens!*" was all Michel said, but the veins in his forehead were standing out like ropes. "*Tiens!!* And how will you pay for it? In cash?"

"In cash," said Papa Jacques.

Mlle Rose's heart was leaping. She put her hand over her mouth to keep from screaming.

Michel tried not to show his surprise. He was ashamed, because he knew that he had failed to recognize the importance of this new guest, this friend of Malou's. He had taken him to be a poor second-rate artist, nothing more. "*Tiens!*" Michel said again. "And when will you give me this twenty thousand francs in cash?"

"In the morning. As soon as we can get to a bank in Vevey."

Michel tapped his wooden shoes on the floor and eyed Papa Jacques. "I might have known that it would be an American who would buy. Americans buy everything." Michel smiled and offered Papa Jacques his hand. "I'm glad that you want the old place. Malou will be glad, too. She will not mind selling so much, now that it is

you who buys. She seems to be very fond of you."

Mlle Rose was choking. She was far too excited to tell Papa Jacques how grateful she was. All she seemed able to do was to stand still with a radiant expression on her face and murmur, "How silly I was! I might have known! I might have known!"

"I should like to go to tell Malou," said Papa Jacques. "Here is my offer in writing, Michel, and here is my signature." He handed Michel a slip of paper. "I will be very glad if you will sign your name to this and say that the terms are satisfactory to you and that you will accept my offer, Michel, for The Six Cats."

Michel took the paper and examined it carefully. It was difficult for him to believe that anything so fortunate could happen. "How do I know that you will pay?" he mumbled under his breath. "How do I know that you will be able to get the money from the bank in Vevey?"

Papa Jacques reached into his pocket and drew out a roll of bills which he handed to Michel. "Count them, please," he said. "I think you will find five hundred francs or more. I shall be glad to have you accept them as a deposit. I wish to consider this transaction closed."

Michel was almost childish in the way that he snatched at the bills. "Thanks, thanks!" he said. "The hotel is yours."

Papa Jacques smiled. He could not be angry with this old fellow; there was something like a schoolboy about him. "Let's shake hands, Michel. From now I should like to feel that we are partners in a way."

Michel beamed and they shook hands.

"Now for Malou," said Papa Jacques.

"Oh, yes, Monsieur, do tell her quickly!" exclaimed Mlle Rose, hurrying to open the door for him.

Papa Jacques ran outdoors and found Malou beside the trough with her arms around Pataud. He did not wait to go close to her but called out, "Whoo-hoo! Come here at once! I want you to introduce me to all my new animals. Come on, Malou! Hurry up!"

"Is that you, Papa Jacques? Do you want me?" Malou answered sadly. "Has the stranger from Bern gone? Has he bought the hotel?"

"The stranger from Bern has gone. He left five minutes ago. Won't you please come here and introduce me to my new animals?"

Malou did not understand. "My new animals," she thought. "What does he mean by calling

them his?" She ran to him quickly. "What do you mean, Papa Jacques? I didn't know you had any animals. What do you mean?"

Papa Jacques took her small hand and bent over it gallantly. "I mean, Least Lazy Little Lady in Switzerland," he said, "that it has been my honor and my joy, the greatest joy that I have had in years, to buy your hotel of The Six Cats; that everything you love so dearly belongs to me now, and that I am most eager to become intimate with my new animals."

Malou gasped. "You! You, Papa Jacques!! You have bought my Six Cats? YOU!!!"

Papa Jacques bowed again. "Yes, I, John Green, otherwise known as Papa Jacques! It is I who have bought The Hotel of the Six Cats."

It was hard for Malou to speak because she was trembling with joy, but she managed to say, "Oh, Papa Jacques, now I'll not mind going away to school. I won't mind it at all if you are going to be here. Everything will be safe with you, even Pataud. I know you will take care of them. Oh, Papa Jacques, I won't mind going away to school now!"

Before Papa Jacques answered, he took a long look at Malou. "You're still soaking wet. You haven't changed your clothes, Malou, since the

Foudres played their joke on us. If you will promise to go at once and put on dry things I shall tell you something else. Promise?"

Malou nodded.

"Remember the cat's foot?" His eyes were twinkling. "Remember how you said we should hear bad news before it withered? Well, we did. Mlle Rose told us about Herr Polster. But remember what I said when I pulled the goat's beard? How I promised you that we would hear good news before another sunset because I had pulled it?" Malou nodded again. "Well," said Papa Jacques, "if you will run along now and change your clothes I'll tell you the good news when you come back."

"I don't mind being wet, really I don't," pleaded Malou. "Tell me now. I can't wait."

Papa Jacques could not resist. He said, "You will not have to go away to school unless you wish, Malou. No one need leave here—Michel nor Mlle Rose nor Samuel nor Grandpère. No one need leave The Six Cats. I bought it so that you might all go on living here and that I might be able to come as often as I like, just to be happy here with you all the way I have been this time. It is my Six Cats, but I shall need all of you to stay here and take care of it for me."[2]

Mlle Rose and Michel came from the kitchen just in time to hear the end of this sentence. To Mlle Rose it was like a dream come true, but Michel could not understand it at all. It was the kind of thing that Michel had difficulty in believing. He thought there must be a catch somewhere.

Papa Jacques explained it all over again carefully. When he had finished he wagged his pipe at Michel and said, "There is one condition, Michel, and it is this: "You are not to consume more than one bottle of my red wine a day."

Michel grinned sheepishly and asked Papa Jacques to explain it all once more.

Mlle Rose smiled at Papa Jacques as much as to say, "You'll have to humor him."

So Papa Jacques explained it all again.

Malou slipped away and ran around the house to the terrace. Pataud followed her, of course. "Sit down, Pataud," she commanded. "Put your big paws together. There! Now! Thank God for what has happened."

Pataud obeyed to the best of his ability.

"Now! Now!" exclaimed Malou. "We're going to celebrate!" They ran back to the others.

"Mademoiselle Rose! Mademoiselle Rose!" Malou called out. "Where are the candles? The

ones Papa used to burn on fête days. I want the candles, Mademoiselle Rose. Where are they?"

Mlle Rose opened her arms to Malou. She dashed into them breathlessly. They gave each other a quick hug. Then Mlle Rose said, "I'll get the candles. I know just where they are. I'll get them for you." Mlle Rose ran into the house.

Papa Jacques was curious. "What on earth do you want to do with candles, Malou?"

Malou put her finger to her lips. "That's my secret, Papa Jacques. You shall see. Wait! Suppose you take Pataud for a walk. Don't come back for an hour and promise not to peek. Understand? When you do come your beautiful Six Cats will have a surprise ready for you." Papa Jacques filled his pipe, told Malou that anything she wished him to do he would do, and whistled to Pataud. They strolled away together.

"Promise not to come back for an hour? Promise not to peek?" Malou called after them.

"I promise," said Papa Jacques, and disappeared into the deep shadows at the beginning of the road leading down to Chexbres.

Malou ran to Mlle Rose. "Did you find them? Did you find the candles?"

"Yes," answered Mlle Rose, "here they are!

All of them! Just as your father packed them away after the last time he used them. I remember it so well. It was the night of a great vineyard fête. Ninon's father had won the prize for the best-kept vineyard in the canton of Vaud and your father gave a party here in his honor. Every inch of The Six Cats was decorated. It was a wonderful evening! You were just a baby, but you seemed to feel the excitement and would not sleep. I had to carry you in my arms all evening. Every time I tried to take you away from the lighted candles you would cry."

Mlle Rose showed Malou the great box with its hundreds of round chunky little candles lying in rows.

"And the glasses! The little round white cups that hold the candles, have you those, Mademoiselle Rose?"

Mlle Rose pointed to another big box way up high on a shelf in the kitchen closet. "The china glass cups are in that box, Malou. I'll get it down immediately."

Michel came clumping into the kitchen just as Mlle Rose was handing down the box to Malou. "What's all this nonsense? What's the use of burning good candles for nothing? Just

plain foolishness I call it! Just silly extravagance!"

Malou caught him by the arm and spun him round. "Smile! Smile! Michel! It's the most wonderful night in my life! Papa Jacques has bought the hotel! My Six Cats and everything belong to him now, but we are going to live here forever. Smile, Michel! Help us celebrate. Help us set out the candles. Papa Jacques will be back in an hour. Let's have everything brilliant when he comes!"

"Foolish waste!" grumbled Michel, but he couldn't help smiling at Malou.

"They're not your candles, anyway," Mlle Rose reminded him. "They belong to Monsieur Jacques now. Everything belongs to him. You haven't anything to say about it any more."

"I'll help," said Michel, and gathered up a handful of candles with their little glass cups, and clumped out of the kitchen.

"We'll set them along all the front window sills," said Malou, "and if there are any left over we'll put them on top of the pump with the geraniums."

Everyone had been so excited that they had forgotten Grandpère and Samuel. Grandpère

must have been taking a nap; at any rate, he was not playing his fiddle. But he appeared now, fiddle in hand, and asked one hundred and twenty questions about what was going on. And while they were trying to tell him what had happened Samuel came strolling up from the lower pasture where he had been turning the hay after the storm.

Samuel was almost as slow to believe the good news as Michel had been, but once he understood he behaved like a small boy and kept exclaiming, "Didn't I always tell you something like this would happen? Didn't we always hope for something like this? How many times did we say 'perhaps to-morrow'?"

Mlle Rose filled his hands with candles and glass cups and told him to set to work to help decorate.

Samuel began at once to line up the candles along the window sills. He was so pleased that his face shone pink under his long whiskers, and he could not resist teasing Michel for having been so gloomy.

Michel looked ashamed.

In a few minutes everything was ready and Malou said, "Now let's light the candles! He'll be back any minute."

Samuel and Michel lit the candles that were on the second-floor window while Mlle Rose and Malou lit the ones on the ground floor.

Grandpère was all mixed up. He couldn't understand it at all and kept saying that it wan't the Fête of the Narcissus, that they had mistaken the day. Michel had become enthusiastic, wagged his head, and muttered, "Lovely sight! Lovely sight!" Mlle Rose and Malou and Samuel joined hands and danced round and round. There had never been a fête like this in Malou's life. It was the Fête of her Six Cats!

It was only a few minutes now before a long whistle rang out from the shadows on the hill. Papa Jacques was coming back. "Whoo-hoo! I'm coming! Whoo-hoo! I'm coming, ready or not!"

Malou ran to him, blindfolded him, and led him in full view of the old pink house dressed in its fête-day best. "Now!" she said, and untied the handkerchief. "Look! Look!! See how beautiful it is! The Six Cats welcomes its new owner!"

It reminded Papa Jacques of celebrations in Paris on the 14th of July, when the fronts of all the great buildings were alight with a million candles. That was always beautiful. But this, this was far more beautiful! All the flickering

white lights against that wonderful background of soft pink! Hundreds of dancing flames that seemed to want to fly up into the black sky to play with the stars! Row after row of trembling flames edging the window sills and throwing shadows that looked like brownies frolicking on the grass! "It's too beautiful to be real, Malou. I love it all."

"It's yours, Papa Jacques! Just think! Your very own." She smiled up at him wistfully and said, "I'm so glad. I'd rather have it belong to you than to me."

CHAPTER XVII

Good-bye

EARLY the next morning Papa Jacques heard Malou skipping about in the garden. He went out onto his balcony to call to her. "Please, Least Lazy Little Lady in the World, may I have my breakfast on the terrace this morning?"

Malou waved to him with a bunch of the

brilliant phlox that she had been gathering and called out, "Yes, indeed, Papa Jacques! I'll set a table for you under our tree and I'll give you the very best red-and-white checked cloth."

A few minutes later Papa Jacques appeared, carrying his knapsack.

At first Malou thought that he might be going to take her for another picnic or a mountain climb. But after a moment she noticed that his manner was different from every day. There seemed to be an air about him of looking at the time, a sense of having to go somewhere. "Papa Jacques, why are you so spick-and-span this morning? Why have you brought your knapsack downstairs?"

Pataud understood. He had sniffed the knapsack thoroughly and with that curious dog sense of his he knew that Papa Jacques was going away. He sat down, looking very dejected.

"Tell me quickly, Papa Jacques! Why have you brought your knapsack downstairs?" Malou need scarcely have asked. In her heart she was beginning to know.

"First of all," answered Papa Jacques, "I am going to the bank in Vevey to get the money to pay Michel for *our* Cats. They will always be

ours, yours and mine together. It would not be any fun at all to have them by myself." Papa Jacques leaned over to scratch Pataud behind the ear. "And then," he said, "after I give the money to Michel, I'm going to Paris."

Malou caught her breath: "Going to Paris! You're going away to Paris!"

He nodded. "You see, Malou, I've stayed here much, much longer than I had any idea of staying. And now I must go back to my studio to work. You can't do all the work in the world, young lady. I have to do my share. I must go back to Paris, understand?"

"Of course," said Malou. "You cannot stay here forever. You have to be a great artist." She, too, smiled, but her face grew serious as she looked at the dead candles in their white glass shrouds. How dismal they seemed all of a sudden.

"One of these days," he went on, hating to see the sad look in her face, "I shall have studied enough to be able to come back to my Cats to spend a whole jolly winter. I'd love to paint Chexbres in her snow blankets. Remember the jewels in the *névé* on the Rochers? Weren't they splendid? I suppose all the hillsides around here wear them, too, in winter. It must be like

living in a crystal palace. Yes, sir, I'll be back sometime to paint them."

"And you could ski down to school with me in the mornings," said Malou eagerly. "Then in the afternoons when the sun's setting we could climb up together. Perhaps when you're a great artist you won't have such a hard time mixing the right shades of blue and pink. You know, Papa Jacques, while you're away this winter I think I'll try to paint a great deal. Wouldn't it be funny if I found the sunset pinks and lavenders and had them to show you when you come back?"

"It wouldn't surprise me at all," said Papa Jacques. Then he turned to Pataud, who had come to stand close beside him. "You'll have to be a Saint Bernard and a half, old fellow, and give your mistress special care this winter if she takes to painting pictures of the hillsides in zero weather. Understand?"

Pataud did not altogether understand but he wagged his heavy tail, anyway.

Grandpère had begun his fiddling. The thin voice of his violin drifted out to them on the terrace.

"What about breakfast, Malou? I don't have to starve just because I'm going to Paris, do I?"

Our old friend the horse-chestnut tree is singing such a merry song."

"I think it's horrid of it to be so gay when you're going away," Malou answered.

"It's gay because it knows that it belongs to us forever, and that there is not the slightest chance of anyone from Bern or anywhere else chopping it down."

"I know. I'm happy, too," Malou said, smiling. "Even after you've gone, Papa Jacques, I'll not be sad. Whenever I think I'm going to be, I'll remember the good times we've had. And it'll be great fun, more fun than ever, taking care of the hotel. I'll scrub all sorts of places that I never thought of scrubbing before, even the darkest corners that don't show. Then I'll get Mademoiselle Rose to teach me how to cook all kinds of dishes so that I can make them for you when you come back." She looked at him appealingly as much as to say, "You will come back, surely, won't you?"

"Don't forget, Malou, that I like our Six Cats just as it is. I shouldn't care to have it too spick-and-span. Don't mend any crumbling corners and don't scrub away too much dinginess."

Malou shook her head and started across the terrace toward the kitchen.

"If there is any gooseberry marmalade," he called after her, "I should like to have some for my farewell breakfast."

Mlle Rose happened to come onto the terrace just in time to hear the last words, "farewell breakfast." She almost dropped the dish of fruit that she was carrying, exclaiming, "Farewell breakfast!! What do you mean, farewell breakfast? You're not going away?"

Malou explained quickly. "He has to go, Mademoiselle Rose. He has to go back to Paris to study."

Michel must have heard this from where he was snoozing by an open window in the dining room. He came clumping down the steps onto the terrace. His face was decidedly purplish, and he sputtered as he began angrily, "What about my money? What about paying for the hotel, Monsieur Green? What's all this funny business, going away to Paris indeed! Not until you've paid for the hotel!" Michel was thoroughly alarmed. He had been suspicious all along. Men like this "Papa Jacques" seemed too good to be true. Michel had half expected that there would be a slip about paying for The Six Cats. "What about my money? When do you intend paying, Monsieur Green?" There was an unpleasant

sound at the end of "Green" the way Michel pronounced it.

"Oh, dear," muttered Mlle Rose, disgusted at Michel for being so stupid.

But Papa Jacques reassured her with a smile. And he said, "It's perfectly natural that Michel should wonder whether I am going to pay, especially when he heard, all of a sudden, that I intend going to Paris. I don't blame Michel in the least."

Mlle Rose just shrugged her shoulders; she was still annoyed at Michel.

"I am going to the bank on my way to the train," said Papa Jacques to Michel. "You will have your money, all of it, before I leave."

"*Tiens!*" said Michel, slightly ashamed of himself, and grinning foolishly he walked off without another word.

It happened that just about this time the man from Bern drove up in front of the hotel.

Samuel, who was drawing water from the trough, was so surprised that he dropped both buckets with a splash and ran toward the kitchen, calling, "Mademoiselle Rose! Malou! Michel! Where are you? The gentleman from Bern—he is here again!"

Herr Polster paid no attention to Samuel, just

swaggered into the hotel, as Malou, Mlle Rose, and Papa Jacques came hurrying around to the front door.

They found Samuel gazing after Herr Polster. "What does he want? He went in there—the man from Bern. Why has he come back?"

"I don't know, but I intend to see," said Papa Jacques, hurrying indoors.

From where they stood by the door all of them could hear what happened.

"I have bought The Six Cats. The transaction is closed. The hotel is mine." This from Papa Jacques.

It was followed by an exclamation of rage from Herr Polster. Then Michel went into the office. He began sputtering in his efforts to explain to the man from Bern what had happened, how Monsieur Green had offered more money for The Six Cats and had been willing to make terms that did not include Julie's hut.

Another series of exclamations followed this announcement. They were not pretty exclamations, either, for the man from Bern was extremely angry.

Papa Jacques objected to the language. "Stop using such words," he ordered. No one could

mistake the tone of his voice. "Stop talking altogether. There is nothing more to be said. The hotel belongs to me. The matter is settled."

One or two more explosive sentences followed.

"Get out!" Papa Jacques commanded fiercely.

Then Mlle Rose and Malou and Samuel saw the stranger from Bern pushed through the door into the front yard to land on his knees not more than ten feet from where they were standing.

What a moment that was!

No one spoke except Samuel, and he could not resist calling out, "Too bad! Too bad! And meat bringing such high prices these days!"

Herr Polster picked himself up, shook his fist at Samuel, said a word or two to his chauffeur, adjusted his red tie, stepped haughtily into his car, and called out as he was leaving, "Good-riddance! Nothing but a tumbling-down shack, anyway!"

Then Mlle Rose cried out excitedly, "*À bas les Bernese!* [Down with the Bernese]!"

Papa Jacques and Michel burst out laughing at this, but Malou felt sad. Seeing the stranger drive away had made her remember that very soon, almost any minute, Papa Jacques would be leaving, too. Going up to him, she slipped her

hand into his and joked a little about Herr Polster's red necktie.

Papa Jacques looked down at her affectionately. "Some day when you are older, Malou, you must come to Paris to study art. But perhaps by that time I shall have learned enough to be able to teach you myself." He looked toward the barn. "You know that north corner by the pigeons' house would make an excellent studio. Some day we shall turn it into one."

Malou clapped her hands. "Samuel and I can work on it while you're away, Papa Jacques. Can't we, Samuel?"

The old gardener knew nothing whatever of studios, but he was quick enough to guess that the scheme meant work, more work. As if there was not enough to do as it was! He gave a rather discouraging grunt that made everyone laugh.

"Don't worry, Samuel," said Papa Jacques, laying his hand assuringly on the old man's shoulder. "It's best not to do anything about the studio until I come back."

Whereupon Samuel grinned.

"Perhaps, Malou," Papa Jacques went on, "we can begin the work when I come back at New Year's to see Chexbres in her snow jewels."

"New Year's!" Malou opened her eyes very

wide. He was coming back at New Year's! This news made her so happy that, strangely enough, she felt like crying.

The next hour was a breathless one. While Papa Jacques went down to the bank in Vevey with Michel, Mlle Rose and Malou tied up a tempting package of biscuits and sandwiches for him to eat during the long train trip. Everything was ready by the time he came back from Vevey.

"Ninon, Cri-Cri, Robie, and Noël," said Papa Jacques. "I must not go without saying good-bye to them. And Julie, I'd like to see her, too. Come along, Malou. Let's race down the hill."

Such a flying trip that was that they had no time to notice whether or not they stepped on limaces, nor was there a second to look at the rose-pink phlox, just time for the old woman to give Papa Jacques a handful of strawberries and offer her withered hand, mumbling huskily, "Come back soon, Monsieur. God bless you."

Saying good-bye to Ninon, Cri-Cri, Robie, and Noël took a moment or two longer than saying good-bye to Julie. Robie had to begin his questions. Why was Papa Jacques going away? Where was Paris? Was it a picnic spot? Could he go, too? And everyone wanted to know when

Papa Jacques was coming back to Chexbres. Then Cri-Cri made him shake hands with the monkeys.

"They'll be as big as gorillas the next time I see them if you keep on feeding them so much," laughed Papa Jacques.

Just then the train whistle sounded in the valley and there was hardly time to race old Escargot down the hill to the station. Never in all his life had he traveled so fast as he did then; his sides were heaving like a bellows as he drew alongside the platform.

"Don't forget, Malou. Don't scrub our Six Cats too much. And write to me."

"Every day," she promised, helping him swing the knapsack across his shoulder.

There was scarcely a moment left for good-bye and perhaps it was just as well. Mlle Rose's eyes were swimming in tears and there was a worried expression of wrinkles on Pataud's forehead.

"New Year's!" called Papa Jacques from the steps of the train.

"New Year's," Malou answered with a smile, and stood there waving both her hands until the train was out of sight.

THE END